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ON MUSIC'S BORDERS

By SIR RICHARD TERRY

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INTRODUCTION

A COLLECTION of press articles in book form demands—at this time of day—rather more than the usual justification.

To write a musical article in a non-musical weekly paper is (at least so I found it) as stimulating an experience as a critic could wish for. Among other things he learns the uses of humility.

It is quite easy for him to write about music from accepted professional standpoints. He learns humility when he finds that his lucubrations have missed fire; that he has been appealing to the wrong audience; barking up the wrong tree so to speak.

The critic on the daily press has few (if any) opportunities of finding out if or when he has misfired. So many forces intervene between himself and his readers—an editor, a sub-editorial blue pencil, "considerations of space," under stress of which his carefully thought out article appears next morning boiled down to a fourth of its original length, with his most telling points omitted, and his sequence of ideas destroyed.

The critic on a weekly paper who is given a definite number of columns to fill is spared this heartbreaking experience, but he is no nearer getting into direct touch with his readers unless certain things happen. My personal experiences may throw some light on them.

I joined the staff of the *Queen* during the old and time-honoured regime, under which the musical critic was expected to conform to ancient usage and make "concerts and recitals" his chief feature. It was vain to protest (1) that any given concert was noticed *next morning* in the daily press; (2) that the earliest notice of it in the *Queen* could not appear until *nine days later* (normally it was a fortnight); (3) that only in concerts of special importance would so late a notice be justified; (4) that the majority of recitals were not worth reporting, and that the space they occupied could be more profitably employed; (5) that people who attended concerts formed their own opinions, and were uninfluenced by those of a professional

critic ; (6) that people who were not sufficiently interested in concerts to attend them were unlikely to be interested in belated reports of them.

With a new regime came agreeable changes. I was relieved of concert reporting, and attended only such performances as had some special significance. I was also encouraged not only to write on such topics as were in the air at the time, but also to make excursions into whatever byways of music took my fancy. Then came developments which surprised me :

Under the old regime I never received a communication from any reader. Under the new "all sorts and conditions" began to send me letters, and this has continued ever since. I soon became aware that all my previous critiques had misfired. If people write to you it means that they have read you. The period when they did not write was clearly a period when I went unread—not a very flattering thought, but eminently good for the soul.

I soon found myself initiated into almost personal relationship with my readers—a large family, exercising to the full (as is the habit of all large families) the privilege of refreshingly outspoken criticism.

I speedily learnt from them three useful things : that they welcomed the personal note in criticism ; that they became restive under homilies ; that they resented the form of egotism which manifests itself in a laboured avoidance of the first person singular.

Until those days I had not realised how large is that otherwise cultured class which fights shy of music until you can break down its timidity. It is kept at bay by the dead hand of old traditions, e.g. that the only "musical" people are those who can sing or play ; that music is a "gift" confined to the few and denied to the many ; that counterpoint and fugue are not jolly exercises but profound mysteries which only the "gifted" may fathom ; that it is a sign of bad taste to like any music save that

which the professors have labelled "classical." It has been brought up to think of music only in terms of public concerts; it has had no guidance in appreciating pre-"classical" music; it is afraid to express a liking for any post-"classical" music which has not had the imprimatur of "recognised authorities." In fact, it is too scared to believe—what is the truth—that (given the chance) it is capable of as wise an understanding of music as of books; of as deep an attachment to music as to pictures. It can converse easily and intelligently with authors and painters; in the presence of a Doctor of Music it is dumb. It is incredulous if told that the capacity to understand music is more general than the capacity to understand books; that tone-deafness (in other words, unmusicality) is even rarer than that rarest of defects—colour blindness.

But once these potential music-lovers can be brought to see their old bogeys for the scarecrows that they are, they acquire a new joy in music. They acquire powers of shrewd and penetrating criticism that have sometimes made one person at least feel humble by comparison.

My own immediate circle of readers has been good enough to say that I have helped it in the matter of musical appreciation. Should this book encourage other amateurs, in similar plight, to get rid of *their* inferiority complex, its purpose will be achieved.

Lastly, the term "critic," as used in the following chapters, bears no reference whatever to musical critics of the Press. It applies exclusively to that larger and less tolerant class which bourgeons in domestic circles and effloresces in academic ones.

ON MUSIC'S BORDERS

ON MUSIC'S BORDERS

I

SIXTY YEARS OF MUSIC IN ENGLAND

[1861 to 1921]

The period covered by this title takes us back to 1861, nearly halfway through the reign of Queen Victoria; back to the days when we placed antimacassars on horse-hair sofas and called our parents papa and mamma; back to the days when British painting held its own, and English literature saw a great epoch in the making; back to the days when such widely divergent messages as those of the popular idols, Carlyle, Tennyson and Dickens, covered but a portion of the richly varied range of English letters.

But the activity of Victorian science, the virility of Victorian letters, the vitality of the plastic arts, had no counterpart in British music. Natural science, philosophy, painting, poetry, fiction—all were in full vigorous life; music was worse than dead. She lived; but what a life!—smug, self-satisfied, sordid and ignoble, crawling and scrabbling on the dust-heap, where once she had stood proudly erect on the mountain-peaks, facing the light.

The England of Spenser, More, Lovelace and Shakespeare led the way in European music. The England of 1861—sterile and barren—had lost the very memory of her ancient musical heritage. She became the lawful prey of every parasitic foreigner. She fawned at the feet of every foreign performer and licked the dust before every foreign singer, until he shook that dust from off his feet and retired to his native land, to a life of ease purchased with England's gold. One of the most famous of the tribe built himself a palace and called it "England's Folly." The measure of his contempt was the measure of our musical degradation.

But this contempt of British music was not peculiar

to the foreign parasite. The British man of letters (small blame to him) was of like opinion. In 1861 Macaulay's *History of England* had been in print only thirteen years. Poetry, drama, painting, architecture and sculpture he elaborately discussed; music he entirely ignored. This was specially noticeable in Chapter III, where the social and artistic conditions of the year 1685 received lengthy consideration, but the name of Henry Purcell—then in his full maturity—was not so much as mentioned.

In 1561 (and in a lesser degree in 1661) we composed music and performed it ourselves. It was a part of our intellectual life and a prominent factor in our national culture. We were a nation of music-*makers*. In 1861 we no longer created, and had fallen hopelessly behind other nations in executive ability. That was the foreigner's opportunity, and he supplied the latter deficiency in full measure. We, who had been a nation of creators and executants, became a nation of listeners. That is why we welcomed every new performer, and had no use for any new composer, unless—like Weber, Mendelssohn, and even poor old Spohr—he came over as a virtuoso and conducted his own works. True, the Philharmonic Society had encouraged Beethoven to the extent of paying £100 for a symphony, but that was long before 1861, by which time the old Philharmonic had entered on that period of obscurantism which lasted into our own generation. Other less fortunate composers were compelled to wait until taken under the wing of the continental "artist." What is why the operas of Verdi were in full swing in 1861, and those of Wagner were unknown. (The prima donna of 1861 had no use for Wagner.) That is why in 1861 we knew little or nothing of Schumann. We had to wait until his devoted wife (being a foreigner, of course) came over here sufficiently often to play his piano works.

We were not helped in those days by musical criticism, since there were no critics worthy of the name, and art and letters held aloof in indifference and contempt. The

prevailing attitude of mind is reflected in an article which appeared in Charles Dickens's periodical (*All the Year Round*) in 1861, in which Schumann was held up to ridicule, and Wagner arraigned as a conscious charlatan. But professional musical criticism was no better. *The Times* and the *Athenæum* were journals of high literary repute, but their musical criticism was in the hands of J. W. Davison and H. F. Chorley respectively, a couple of pretentious scribes who would not be tolerated to-day on the veriest local rag that ever thundered from the printing press of a cathedral town. Even in their own day (in spite of the immense power they wielded) they were not always accepted as oracles; hence the witty limerick (they did have limericks in the 'sixties) on Davison:

> "There was once a J. W. D.,
> Who fain a composer would be:
> But his muse wouldn't budge,
> So he set up as judge
> Over better composers than he."

The innings of this pair (at any rate, that of Davison) was a long one, for Davison was alive when Mackenzie's *Rose of Sharon* was produced in the 'eighties, and a certain type of musical journal hailed it as a master-work, not because it was good (for it certainly *was* good, being head and shoulders above any British work of its kind), but because "J. W. D." had said: "The finest thing since *Elijah*." Such was musical criticism in the 'sixties. The measure of its influence was also the measure of our musical degradation.

But if the 'sixties were barren of native composers and executants, we at any rate produced such remarkable singers as Sims Reeves, Santley and Patey—the like of whom have not been heard since. It would be easy to copy out a list of the big foreign artists who made our music then—Mario, Lablache, Malibran, Patti, etc.—together with the stock anecdotes concerning them, but

as we are concerned with *music* in England (its conditions and its progress) and not the *performers* of it, I forbear. I must make one exception, as it is a delicious reflex of the mental attitude of the time. Liza Lehmann relates (in her memoirs) that she once had tea with Jenny Lind. The refection was served by a youthful-looking "Buttons." When he had left the room, Jenny Lind turned to her guest, and said in a solemn voice: "You see that boy? I am trying to conquer myself—to bear with him. But" (this in sepulchral tones) "*he is a Roman CATHOLIC!*"

We shall realise the true nakedness of the land if we take note of what manner of men were then our "great" composers. Undoubtedly the best of them was Sterndale Bennett, who was born in 1816. His father died in 1819, and the lad was taken charge of by his grandfather, a lay-clerk at King's College, Cambridge, who later placed him in the chapel choir, where he remained until 1826, when (at the age of ten) he was so remarkably advanced in music that he entered the Royal Academy as a violin student. He remained at the Academy for ten years, and studied under Crotch and Cipriani Potter. His best work was composed when he was a student and he had "written himself out" before he was thirty. In 1833 he played in a piano concerto of his with such success that Mendelssohn (who was present) invited him to Germany, but before going there he had already composed three symphonies, four concertos and three overtures, besides certain smaller pieces. In 1836 he went to Leipzig, where he spent nine months. He there attracted the notice of Schumann, who wrote enthusiastically about the clever young Englishman, and secured the publication of his more important works. With the passport of a Schumann testimonial he was welcomed in the Leipzig circle, and played his third concerto at a *Gewandhaus* concert. Later, he conducted his *Naiads* and *Parisina* overtures. On his return to England he was appointed professor at the Royal Academy. We find him again at Leipzig in 1838–9

PLATE I—SIR WILLIAM STERNDALE BENNETT
[1816–1875]

(playing his fourth concerto), and once more in 1842. He was then twenty-six years old, and his compositions had reached Op. 25. They never reached Op. 50, although he lived thirty-three years longer. Nor during what ought to have been his period of maturity did he produce anything more than pale copies of his student work. His failing powers began to be apparent when he was still in his twenties, and his friend Schumann was obliged to say (of his Op. 22): "We begin to fear that Bennett seems to be spinning himself up into a mannerism, from which he finally will not emerge. Of late he says always the same thing, only in varying form; and the more perfectly he has learnt to master the form, the more the real invention in him seems to diminish." But in the intellectual lassitude of his later life one outstanding thing remains to his everlasting credit. He helped to establish the Bach Society, and conducted the *Matthew Passion*, the *Christmas Oratorio*, and part of the *B Minor Mass*. In 1856 he became conductor of the Philharmonic Society and Professor of Music at Cambridge. At the Leeds Festival of 1858 he produced his *May Queen*, and at the Birmingham Festival of 1867 his *Woman of Samaria*. It is by these two works that he is best known to-day, but in neither is there any of the freshness of his *Naiads* overture, for instance. He was knighted in 1871, and died four years later. Until the 'eighties Bennett remained the only modern British composer who deserved any mention whatever. He was a lovable man, and leaves a kindly, pleasant memory, which does much to counterbalance the tragedy of a brilliant youthful promise that was never fulfilled.

The only other outstanding musical figure was that of George Alexander Macfarren—born 1813, died 1887. His influence on British music was as great as that of Bennett, but there all resemblance ends. Bennett, at least, was a master of form, even though his forms were pure Mendelssohn, and he stood for the art of music where Macfarren only stood for its mechanism. In spite of his mental

anæmia and lack of achievement, Bennett had the root of the matter in him. In that sense Macfarren was never a composer. The patience, strong will and ceaseless energy that Bennett lacked, Macfarren had to the full. This tempted him into flights that were far beyond his powers. He wrote three operas whose sentimental periods read oddly now. His cantatas, hailed at their birth as masterpieces, are already forgotten. He wrote much prose criticism of the obscurantist type, and, being the "great man" that he was, on the inception of the *Encyclopædia Britannica,* he was invited to write the article on Musical History. It is a splendid guide to students if they remember that whatever opinions the author expresses about music, the opposite will probably be the correct one. The enormous influence exercised by Macfarren as Principal of the Royal Academy and Professor of Music at Cambridge (he succeeded Bennett in both posts) produced a type of student that was of great assistance to the master in putting back the clock. He wrote two "standard" text-books on Harmony and Counterpoint, the former being a development of the crazy theories of a physician named Alfred Day. After bemusing a whole generation of potential musicians, both books are now discredited. But if Macfarren's influence on British music was a retrograde one, we cannot withhold our tribute of admiration and respect for his character as a man. However limited his conception of music as an art, however mistaken his opinions concerning modern composers, he was at least honest and sincere. He never spared himself in the cause of what he considered to be music, and his steady devotion to his life's work for seventeen years after he was smitten with total blindness presents us with a figure nothing less than heroic. The influence of both Bennett and Macfarren was greatest in the 'seventies, when British music—after the torpor of the 'sixties—began to show signs of stirring in its sleep. In different ways they were the representative men of their period,

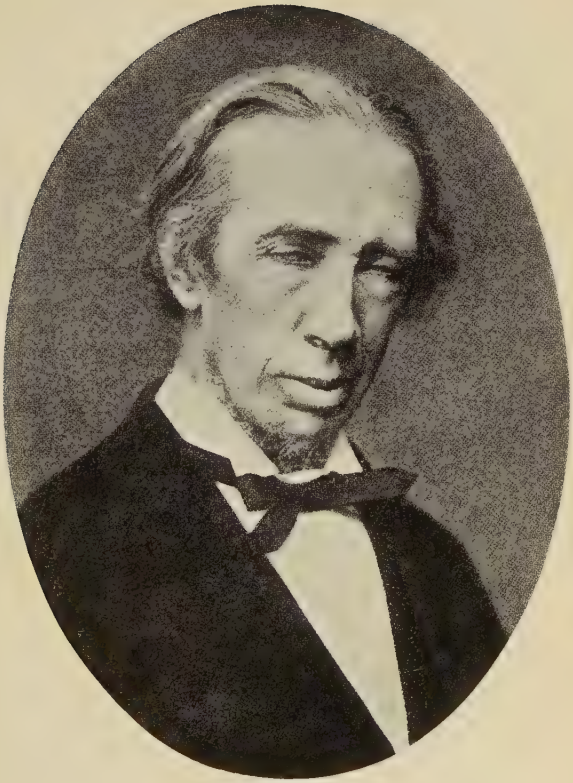


PLATE II—SIR GEORGE MACFARREN
[1813–1887]

since both stood for *production* in music as against *importation.* In the 'seventies the measure of their reputation was the measure of our progress.

In spite of slightly improved conditions in the 'seventies, our plight was deplorable. Foreign fiddlers and foreign pianists we had in plenty, but orchestral music—outside London—was a negligible quantity, save by way of accompaniment to the oratorios that were now increasingly performed. Even in London we only had the intermittent Philharmonic concerts and the weekly ones at the Crystal Palace—the latter, of course, conducted by a German.

Oratorio, however, did foster the taste for that choral music in which England has since excelled. Handel and Mendelssohn were almost the only composers favoured, and not a bad choice in those days. But when cathedral and other organists took a hand in the game, the thing spread like a plague, and reached its *reductio ad absurdum* in the frenzied popularity of Gaul's *Holy City.*

Opera was a sorry farce. The only English operas that have survived were written by Irishmen. (I think this is a legitimate occasion for a bull.) Balfe and Wallace had no musical technique, but they understood the stage requirements of their time, hence the continued vogue of *The Bohemian Girl* and *Maritana.* Covent Garden was then—as it remained till 1914—a social centre, and London Society brought its diamonds to hear expensive foreign stars ring the changes on their limited repertoire. Every now and then an *impresario* would collect a tatterdemalion crowd of foreign hirelings and open a "season" either in London or the larger provincial towns. Artistic success was always doubtful, but financial crash was certain. The *impresario* was frequently missing on pay-day, with a stranded and penniless company left lamenting. This sort of gamble lasted even into the 'eighties. I am old enough to remember one such "season" at the Haymarket, when the worm at length turned. As "the Ghost did not walk" on the Friday, the starving chorus waited

till the audience had assembled for the evening performance; they then hauled up the curtain and appealed to the public, who retorted by throwing money on the stage to be scrambled for. Carl Rosa started his (afterwards famous) company in 1872, with what results we all have grateful knowledge. True, *The Flying Dutchman* was heard at Drury Lane in 1870. Costa also gave *Lohengrin*, but the band parts (as Richter discovered years afterwards) were all wrong. Poor Costa was not musician enough to know that, so the resultant cacophony was debited by the critics to the account of Wagner, by way of additional proof that he had "no tune." What could be expected of opera under the rule of a third-rater like Jules Benedict and a fifth-rater like Michael Costa (of course we knighted them both), with the sweepings of the Italian theatres for chorus? Like conductor, like opera. The measure of their incompetence was the measure of our helplessness.

The 'eighties brought changes little short of revolutionary. When the Albert Hall was opened in 1871 we had to import Gounod to run its concerts. By the 'eighties Barnby was in charge, giving really fine choral performances. A break in the monotonous round of stereotyped oratorios was made with the appearance of Gounod's *Redemption* and *Mors et Vita*—both very fly-blown now, but a surprising relief in their day. Mackenzie's *Rose of Sharon* and Stanford's *Revenge* broke still fresher ground, and Parry's *Blest Pair of Sirens* seemed to mark a revival of the forgotten British art of massive choral writing. Sullivan—after conspicuous failure with stereotyped forms (oratorios and anthems chiefly)—at length made good with a form of light opera that "serious" evangelical England badly needed. The Royal College of Music was opened in 1883, and, although artistic results were slow in materialising, it has eventually given us, in this generation, composers of distinct individuality, with sufficient strength of character to shake themselves free of the Brahms cult that hampered the college in its earlier days. At St. James's

Hall the " Pops " were in full swing, and if no British works were given, we at least acquired a working acquaintance with the masterpieces of classical chamber music. The short-lived Novello Oratorio Concerts, under Mackenzie's conductorship, brought such works as Dvořák's *Stabat Mater* and *Spectre's Bride*—quite new and original forms in those days. Even the universities were waking up. Oxford had two choral societies and two chamber-music clubs, and at Cambridge Stanford was giving alternate concerts of orchestral and chamber music. What a change all this was may be gathered from a recent speech of Sir Henry Hadow, who said that when a musical undergraduate in the 'sixties ventured to ask permission of the Dean of Christ Church for the use of the college hall for a concert, he was ordered to leave the room ; but that he (Sir Henry) had lived to hear pianoforte duets played publicly by a Vice-Chancellor and an ex-Vice-Chancellor in that same hall.

Church music was naturally affected by the general revival, but more in the domain of performance than composition. The output of anthems and services was large, but the style was without distinction. It is not far from the truth to say that save Walmisley and Wesley, no British church-music composer has risen above mediocrity. (Of course, I do not include those bigger composers who have incidentally written for the church.) Good organ playing was now becoming general instead of exceptional. Best and Stainer were unrivalled, but the rank and file upheld a higher standard than in any other country. Backward as the 'eighties were in too many respects, there was a general levelling-up in musical efficiency. The measure of that levelling-up was the measure of our awakening.

Music in the 'nineties was more or less a development and amplification of the efforts of the 'eighties. The epoch-making event was the engagement of Henry Wood for the Promenade Concerts, which have had such far-reaching effects on orchestral music in the country. Mr.

"Gus" Harris at last made opera a paying proposition, and frequent performances of Wagner became the rule, although we had to wait until the next decade for a complete acquaintance with *The Ring*. Even Covent Garden began to pay attention to the mounting of opera. Thanks to "Lord de Grey and Mr. Higgins," the green-room cat was now forbidden the stage while performances were in progress, and stage carpenters were no longer permitted to leave ladders against the scenery after the curtain had gone up. The Moody-Manners Company were giving high-class opera in the provinces, and we were becoming familiar with the Russian school of orchestral music.

With the disappearance of St. James's Hall, chamber music entered on a twenty years' eclipse. The much-belauded provincial festivals were still voluminously written up in the press, and, to outward seeming, they were as portentous as ever; but they had really reached that state of atrophy which inevitably follows annexation by a clique. But a new race of composers, conductors and executants was in the making, and there was a general broadening of our musical horizon. We were learning to rely more on ourselves and less on the foreigner, and the measure of our activities was the measure of our success.

Nineteen hundred saw the production of Elgar's *Gerontius* at the Birmingham Festival, marking a new epoch in choral work. Its disgraceful rendering by the choir showed to what depths of incompetence that self-satisfied and complacent body of once-famous singers had sunk. When the composer was obliged to tell them that they did not understand his music (which was obviously true), their friends raised a howl of indignation at the impertinence of a mere composer in telling a body of such authority as lay-clerks and soulful amateurs that they were not perfect. But the incident did good. It opened the eyes of the country, and there has been a steady improvement in festival choirs ever since. In the next decade events marched with unprecedented rapidity. Russian opera

arrived in 1913. Beecham gave us new operas beyond our wildest dreams. The modern French school at last got a hearing. But perhaps the greatest musical force that was unleashed was the competitive festivals that had been initiated in the 'eighties, at Stratford, by J. S. Curwen and Dr. W. G. M'Naught. At last we have conductors who are real virtuosi, and can hold their own with those of any other country. Our orchestral players are admittedly the finest in the world. Some executants can challenge comparison with their continental confrères. But it is in composers that we are now richest. Elgar belongs to the whole world, Bantock and Ethel Smyth already have a continental reputation, and it is highly doubtful if any other country can produce such a galaxy of young composers. British music has entered on its second spring. The sap is rising in the roots, and the buds are full to bursting.

Edgar Bainton, Arnold Bax, Arthur Bliss, Rutland Boughton, Yorke Bowen, Havergal Brian, Frank Bridge, Benjamin Dale, Frederick Delius, Balfour Gardiner, Armstrong Gibbs, Eugene Goossens, Julius Harrison, Hamilton Harty, Philip Heseltine, Josef Holbrooke, Gustav Holst, Herbert Howells, John Ireland, Roger Quilter, Cyril Scott, Richard Walthew, Vaughan Williams, Charles Wood ; quite a respectable roll of honour !

The measure of their talent is the measure of our triumph.

Epilogue

So far as it is a review of British music up to five years ago, I am prepared to stand by all I have written above, save what is contained in the last eighteen lines. They only go to prove (1) that it is dangerous to prophecy until you know ; (2) how rapidly events have moved since the war.

Five years ago we had every reason for elation over the state of British music. Our young generation of composers had showed such great promise. They began by producing music in greater bulk, and of greater importance than those

of other countries. We had every reason for thinking that British music had entered on its second spring.

But alas, we have seen changes in the past five years which would have been spread over fifty in less vertiginous times. The young British school of music has not fulfilled its early promise. Those of us who have all along been its most ardent supporters have now sorrowfully to admit its collapse. Our young composers, on whom we placed such high hopes, have failed to "stay the course."

Bax is an exception, and so is Vaughan Williams (for Delius can no longer be included among young composers). Bax's recent output has been small, but it maintains its note of distinction. Vaughan Williams plods along, never seeming quite to know where he will ultimately find himself. But his admirers may be sure that it will be in a brighter realm, for he is always to be found with his face towards the light.

Holst, who soared upwards to "the Planets," has managed to weave his own winding sheet with "the Boar's Head," and to dig his own grave with his "Choral Symphony."

A few others, whom I could name, are kept with their noses so close to the professional grindstone that composition on the big scale is (for the present at any rate) out of the question.

As for the majority, they continue to write, or refrain from writing, with equal blamelessness. Their technique is excellent; their aims are eminently correct; their style is unimpeachably gentlemanlike, and their message negligible.

But in all this there is nothing to worry about. If the young British composer has not come up to expectation we may be disappointed, but need not be dismayed. One cannot subscribe to the belief that the collapse of the young British school is a set-back for music. It is merely a set-back for the composers concerned, which is a matter of the deepest regret, but not a matter of international

importance. The root of all music lies in the impulse to compose. The impulse to find self-expression in composition is inherent. It has gone on through all the ages; it will continue through the ages that are yet to come. The seed of music undergoes a constant process of sowing. The nature of its fruition depends on the soil on which it falls. The Parable of the Sower has a startling application in this connexion. I should be inclined to place the young British composer in the class which received the seed "in stony places":

> "Some fell upon stony places
> Where they had not much earth;
> And forthwith they sprang up,
> Because they had no deepness of earth.
> And when the sun was up,
> They were scorched;
> And because they had no root,
> They withered away."

The rapid rise, and even more rapid collapse of the young British school—their early enthusiasms, and their present complacency, are even more aptly summarised in the "interpretation" which follows the Parable:

> "He that received the seed into stony places,
> The same is he that heareth the word,
> And anon with joy receiveth it.
> *Yet hath he not root in himself,*
> But dureth *for a while.*"

There lies the tragedy of it: "For a while!"

II

THE ETERNAL PROBLEM

CERTAIN truths of life are so obvious that no one questions them. To reassert them is to incur the charge of being a retailer of truisms and platitudes. But if we were always as ready to accept the logical consequences of these truths, much futile speculation and barren argument would be spared us.

When the poet wrote :

> " Crabbed age and youth
> Cannot live together,"

he was only repeating an age-long adage, bearing the sanction of centuries, which no human being had ever dreamt of disputing, and which no one now dreams of disputing. Youth is youth, and age is age, and never the twain shall meet.

It is only forgetfulness of this primal fact that is responsible for so much press correspondence about living composers as opposed to dead ones.

These remarks are prompted by a letter which I read in the *Morning Post* from one signing himself " Old Fogey," in which he annihilated the young British composer, and incidentally conveyed the suggestion of his own wisdom in doing it.

It is difficult to restrain a smile at these perennial attacks on the music that is, as opposed to the music that was. Each complainant starts his own hare, and chases it as though no one had previously followed that form of sport. To-day it is Stravinsky and the young British composer. Yesterday it was Wagner, and " way back " in the seventeenth century is was Monteverdi. It is the same old problem, but we are for ever up against that form of mentality which in each succeeding generation trots it out as a new one.

It is not that the grumblers at modern music are devoid of intelligence. From my own experience of them I find that they were usually iconoclasts in youth. The trouble

vith them now is not so much a static imagination, as the nere physical disability known as *Anno Domini.*

When this particular disability attacks a man of business, ıe is speedily " brought up all standing " by the remorseless ›ressure of facts. If he still pins his faith to the machinery ınd methods that made his fathers rich, and refuses the aid f modern plant, he is not long in being " down and out " inancially. Old commercial habits and old commercial ›rejudices are no match for new ideas. Rejection of new deas in commerce means loss of livelihood, and nothing ess ; and no commercial man of sound mind will face such ın alternative.

But with the music-lover things are different. He does ıot make his livelihood by music-loving. And if advancing ears leave him still contemplating the past, he has no inancial ruin to face. He has not the commercial man's ıntidote for self-satisfaction, and no unpleasant incidents vait on the musical *laudator temporis acti.*

Youth is rightly impatient of the Old Fogey. But those f us who have grown up with him know another side of his haracter which does much to explain—if it does not excuse —his attitude.

I have in mind a friend of my boyhood. Musical ıterests drew us closely together. For his intellectual ifts (which stopped little short of genius) I had a profound espect. His musical ability I envied but could not qual. His quick intelligence got to the root of a problem t once, while the rest of us were turning it over in our ıinds. Oratorio held the field in our youth, and I remem- er how startled we were to hear him say that it was a layed-out art form. Everyone says so to-day, but it was eresy then. We learnt music together, and the ease with vhich he mastered its technique was a source of admiration, ot entirely unalloyed with friendly envy. He romped hrough academic counterpoint, and while the rest of us vere wrestling with " the five species " he was reeling off ouble fugues and quadruple canons with the ease of the

expert. Then one fine day he electrified us with the assertion that the whole thing was stupid and silly; that no composer ever wrote such stuff, and that Bach would have been ploughed for his Oxford Mus.Bac. by Professor Ouseley. Everybody knows that now. But it was heresy then.

I remember his crow of delight over Stanford's *Revenge*, and Mackenzie's *Rose of Sharon*, and Parry's *Anacreontic Odes*. Here was "fresh" music, he said, uninfluenced by Mendelssohn. Before any young modern smiles at all this, let me remind him that those were the days when musical criticism was still represented by J. W. Davison and Joseph Bennett; when British music was represented at the "Three Choirs" and other festivals by such oratorios as Barnby's *Rebekah*, Ouseley's *St. Polycarp*, and Dr. Philip Armes's *Hezekiah*. Do not laugh, O young musician, when I tell you that in those days Gaul's egregious *Holy City* first saw the light at a solemn "Birmingham Festival"!

We were always hopelessly outpaced in our musical development by our friend. By the time he had reached early manhood he was fulminating against Stanford, Parry and Mackenzie as vehemently as he had done against Ouseley and the cathedral-organist composers of oratorio. Wagner became his god at a time when that name was still suspect in polite circles. He was always ahead of his time, and was always full tilt against stupidity and insincerity in music whenever he thought he found it. But, like all true moderns, his respect for the Old Masters deepened as his modern tendencies gathered force.

I lost touch with him for a number of years, and when I was again thrown into his society I looked forward to the old stimulus which he never failed to give in the past. I discovered, bit by bit—at first with surprise, and then with consternation—a gradual hardening of the mind, a curious imperviousness to new ideas and new impressions. The man had reached middle life; he had always been a hard

fighter for what he considered were the highest aims in music; he had been looked upon as a dangerous innovator by "safe" musicians, and he accepted the rôle proudly. There is nothing like hard fighting for stiffening the convictions. If he became "cocksure," it was only because he first thought out each problem thoroughly, and grasped it the more firmly through having to fight for it. From being at the outset a receptive enthusiast, he eventually came to believe in himself profoundly, since events had proved him right in most respects. But *Anno Domini* is remorseless. In middle age he did not realise that his mind leaped less readily to meet new things. He still felt himself intellectually the daring modernist. But his belief in himself led him now (still thinking himself impartial) to criticise the moderns as well as the "safe" composers.

It was with real grief that I first noticed this change. Things had gone so far by this time that in his scorn for "erratic" modernism he attended one Scriabin concert and never another. He had lost, without knowing it, that virtue of sympathy which in his early days enabled him to form a just estimate of new music. If it did not then reach his expectations, his criticism was at least tempered with respect for its aims. Deprived of this virtue, his criticism now developed intolerance. Without knowing it, he of the brilliant intellect had become one of the army of Old Fogeys, against whom he had been fighting all his life.

It may be priggish to moralise on all this. But as one gets on in life oneself, it seems that Old Fogeyism persists for lack of one common factor, which may be described as the virtue of humility.

I am thinking not so much of the composer as of the critic, be he domestic or academic. The idea of humility is hardly one which we like to associate with a composer. To be a composer at all a man must have a proper pride in his work, and belief in himself, if he is to give out the best

that is in him. But with the critic and the music-lover it is different. They, too, are all the better for a proper pride and confidence. But it must be a *proper* one. Pride in past achievements is a poor equipment for the task of tackling new problems. Music is a living art, and, as such, must necessarily be subject to unceasing flux and change. Each new phase of it must be judged on its own merits. To treat music at any period as static is to disqualify oneself as a critic. To assess the music of to-day in the light of the "classical composers" is as foolish as to judge the "classical composers" in the light of Palestrina and Byrd. To quarrel with a modern composer's harmony is to imply that the rules of harmony were at some time or other a fixed quantity—which they never were. To quarrel with a composer who breaks away from the idiom of his forebears is to imply that the forebears we quote against him were the last word in music. "Jam yesterday, and jam to-morrow, but never jam to-day." Every generation of old fogeys has fixed the ultimate perfection of music at a period just a little anterior to its own. And as these fixtures equal the generations in their number, we arrive at the *reductio ad absurdum* of that method of criticism.

Advancing years frequently bring the man of letters to a point where he feels himself out of touch with modern tendencies. He is then content to spend his declining days with his favourite authors. But we don't hear him saying that the works with which he is not in sympathy are not literature. Consequently, though he may grow old, he does not become an old fogey. But the musical person is given to claiming that what he does not like is not music. And there lies the difference: he may not be old in years; he may not be an old fogey in any other respect; but he is an old fogey in music.

One would not mind this lack of receptivity so much if it were not accompanied by a pontifical manner that implies a reserve of wisdom and matured judgment. However

much the old fogey may assert his openness of mind, he is—at the back of everything—referring every modern composer backwards to some fixed standard of his own in the past. If this attitude is to have any justification, it ought to be made clear that the best composer is he who most faithfully conforms to some former type—in other words, that he should cease to be original, which, as Euclid hath it, is absurd.

No. The truth about the old fogey is that he does not realise the defect in himself—*Anno Domini.* It is so easy to get rid of a problem by saying that it is not a problem but an aberration. It is so easy to get into the habit of thinking that our own view of a problem settles the matter. It is so difficult to see that it is our fixed habits which limit our vision and close the once ever-open door of the mind.

If we could cultivate a little more critical humility, and listen, and listen, and listen again to what the new composer is trying to say to us, and what he is trying to make us understand, we should be less foolish in our criticism. We would do well to pray continually the prayer of the Scottish meenister: "Give us, O Lord, receptivity; which word—as Thou, O Lord, art doubtless aware—signifieth the power of receivin' impressions."

III

THE PLACE OF PURCELL

PURCELL has hitherto, by universal acclaim, enjoyed the title of England's greatest musician. Until I had scored the works of William Byrd and other Elizabethans, I too subscribed to this belief. Much of Purcell is in print, and no great quantity (compared with his total output) of Byrd. Purcell's printed music was before us, and we revelled in its sheer beauty and grace and strength. Transcribing Byrd's from separate part-books into modern score was a long process, but one which carried deeper and deeper conviction, as it went on, that without question one must revise one's estimate of the two composers. I trust I shall be acquitted either of any attempt to disparage Purcell or of any egotistical expression of opinion when I state that, however great was Henry Purcell, in William Byrd we have the greatest musician England has ever produced in any age. His greatness has hitherto lacked recognition because his music has been practically unknown. The time is not far distant when most of it will be in print, and then—to all unprejudiced critics—my estimate of the composer (first uttered twenty-six years ago) will be recognised not as an egotistical opinion, but as a sober truth. Having denied to Purcell the position of "Our Greatest English Composer," one is bound in common justice to concede to him everything else.

Like Byrd, he has suffered every possible injustice at the hands of musical historians. Like Byrd, some of his divinest music lay long entombed in the British Museum and other libraries. Like Byrd, he has been censured by every academic, from Burney onwards, for his discords and crudities, when the sober fact is that both Byrd and Purcell were generations ahead of their time, intuitively reaching across the ages towards harmonic effects which were later to become the commonplaces of their musical descendants. Like Byrd, too (contrary to all the historians tell us), Purcell was not the founder of a new school, but the last shining light of the old. Just as Byrd

PLATE III—PORTRAIT OF PURCELL

was the lineal musical descendant of Fayrfax and Taverner, summing up their beauties with an even greater beauty, a firmer touch, and a more confident technique, so was Purcell the consummation (both in beauty and technique) of that fresh, open-air period so bravely initiated by the versatile Dowland, the melodious Jones, the quaintly elusive Rosseter, the prolific and poetical Campion, and in which the conscientious Lawes laboured with such exceeding and great labour.

Unlike his predecessors (the Elizabethan madrigalists-in-chief), Purcell broke no new ground. He was no reformer, turning musicians into new paths. He was the product of his own age. He employed the means ready to hand, but splendidly did he turn them to his own devices, and with triumphant effect did he fashion them to his own will. That he knew contemporary Italian and French music is certain. That he was influenced by both is equally true. But, however much he used similar forms, his sonatas can no more be considered Italian than his instrumental music in general can be considered French. That he owed something to the old English composers of "Fancies" seems evident, but he broke clean away from them in the direction of conciseness and clarity. His terse and well-knit forms are in striking contrast with the rambling diffuseness so characteristic of the earlier composers of the "Fancy," which in its early stages, at least, was simply vocal counterpoint transferred to strings. But Purcell brought these early essays to a head. He gave them form and structure, and in place of a hybrid "Apt alike for Viols and Voyces," he left us instrumental music from which everything alien to itself had been eliminated.

Whether Purcell had an intimate acquaintance with the Tudor polyphonists is doubtful. But (in his own different idiom, of course) he resembled them in his genius for marshalling masses of vocal tone. Take, for example, the brilliancy of *Let all rehearse*, or the splendid pomp and pride of *Thou art the King of Glory*, and *Day by day we*

magnify Thee, from the *Te Deum*. In this respect he anticipated Handel, and if one thing in music appears more certain than another it is that Handel profited by acquaintance with Purcell's choral music, and imbibed Purcell's style to such an extent as to give his own choral writing that English quality which, German though he was, distinguishes it from either Bach or his German contemporaries.

Like every other composer of the time, Purcell wrote much for the church. That is not, however, to say that he was a church composer in the sense that Byrd, Palestrina and Bach were church composers. Gorgeous as most of his anthems are, they are (in the best sense of both terms) as pagan in spirit and secular in expression as they are musically exquisite.

It is in his works for the stage that some of Purcell's best music will be found. He is credited with the music for over fifty dramas, but, with the exception of *Dido and Æneas*, none of them fulfils our idea of an opera. They are mainly incidental vocal and instrumental music to fill out that type of Restoration play which partook of the nature of the old Tudor masque, and was too often a clumsy adaptation from Shakespeare or the other Elizabethan dramatists. *The Tempest* is one of his best and most richly coloured. *The Fairy Queen* is less charged with mystery than *The Tempest*, but it is delicate, fanciful, suggestive and enchanting all the same. The trouble about Purcell's life and music is that the former has always been the sport of every traducing historian, and the latter the sport of many incompetent editors. Now, however, that we have scholars turning their attention to Purcell's stage music, we may reasonably hope that the beauties of these so-called operas will soon become, as they ought, a national possession. The amazing thing about them is that within their circumscribed limits Purcell could achieve such great results. It has been too long the fashion to speak of them as "scrappy." This is to overlook their

cameo-like proportions and, above all, their astounding wealth of thematic material. The highly elaborated forms of the eighteenth century had not then come into being, but the germ of all that was greatest in them is to be found in Purcell. This alone is to rank him with the immortals.

IV

A FORGOTTEN COMPOSER

(George Frederick Handel)

That certain composers should enjoy a run of popularity and then drop out of memory is quite a common occurrence. That certain composers should be neglected during their lifetime and afterwards enjoy posthumous fame is an equally common experience.

But the weirdest British characteristic is to place certain composers on a pedestal; to apply the most exaggerated terms of praise to them; to make them, in fact, "household words"; and yet to remain in the most profound ignorance of their music. Tallis and Merbecke are cases in point. Of the former (until recently) we knew nothing beyond his *Responses*, his *Evening Hymn*, one "Service" and two or three anthems. Of the latter we (even now) know nothing beyond his *Communion Service*, adapted from his *Booke of Common Praier Noted*. And yet their names have always been on the lips of church organists as "Fathers of English Music."

A similar fate is that of George Frederick Handel. It is safe to say that of all the great composers who have ever lived (and I place Handel among the great ones, in the same category as Palestrina, Byrd, Bach, Mozart, Beethoven and Wagner), no one of them has suffered such unmerited neglect as Handel now "enjoys." Palestrina and Byrd have at last come into their own; we have Bach festivals all over the country; our orchestras specialise in Beethoven; and Wagner or Mozart is a safe draw in the concert-room or the opera-house.

But when it comes to poor old Handel, what do we find? A triennial orgy at the Crystal Palace, when an impossible collection of impossible people meet together and try to perform him under impossible conditions; a more or less moribund "Handel Society," whose attachment to "the Master," until Goossens took them in hand, was but lukewarm—to judge by the number of other composers

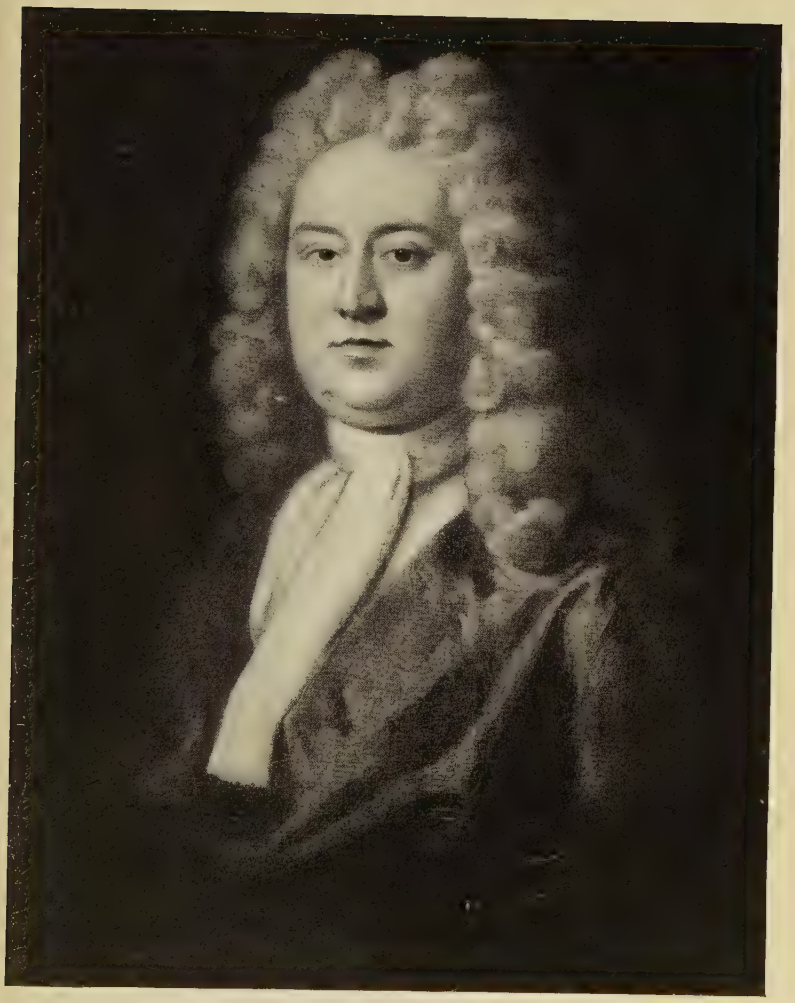


PLATE IV—PORTRAIT OF HANDEL

to whom they devote themselves at their infrequent public performances; a regiment of tenors who bleat "Kormafort ayee" on every possible occasion, and bellow "Evoree varley" in and out of season; a battalion of basses who bawl "Ho roddyer tharn the cherry" and persistently inquire "Whoy doo thor nations so furiously rage togethor?"; two or three songs which now and then stray in to the programmes of a vocal recital.

And that is all.

Of course I am aware of the plethora of *Messiah* performances during the Christmas season, but as "A. K. H.," of the *Liverpool Post*, once wrote:

> The recent orgy of *Messiah* performances has been hailed as evidence that the great heart of the British musical public is fundamentally sound. It has been spoken of as something of which we ought to feel proud. In point of fact, it is a thing of which we ought to be profoundly ashamed.

Yes. We ought to feel ashamed, but we are not. Had Handel been a third-rater like Gounod, and only composed one good work by accident (like Gounod), we should be justified in performing that work as often as we perform *Messiah*. But Handel happens to be a first-rater who wrote hundreds of works—each one a masterpiece. Ought we not, then, to be ashamed of our ignorance; ashamed to call ourselves "Handelians" and "Handel-lovers," on the strength of persistent performances of *one* work of his?

There is something very ludicrous about the *Messiah*-worshipper. He calls himself a Handelian; he tells you that Handel is the greatest composer who ever lived; he tells you proudly how many *Messiah* performances he has assisted at, as listener or performer, and becomes furious if you suggest that the number is too many. And when humble Handel-lovers try to find how much he knows of the music of his idol, they discover that it stops short at *Messiah*. He naturally knows the names of a few other

oratorios, and thinks of Handel only as an oratorio composer. He gets a shock when you tell him that Handel wrote only seventeen oratorios as against forty operas. He gets a still greater shock when you tell him that Chrysander's edition of Handel's works runs to a hundred volumes.

But that is not the worst about your British "Handelian." He has evolved a heavy, lumbering, cart-horse-like method of singing Handel. He calls this big bow-wow "the Handel tradition," and even applies it (heaven forgive him) to the mystic imagery of Bach. You may tell him till you are black in the face that Handel was (musically) an Italian by training; that he has all the Italian grace and elegance of style which will not stand rough handling. All to no purpose; he will return to his *Messiah* and bellow out "He shall purify," for all the world like a corpulent Dutch galliot wallowing in the trough of a heavy sea.

But the most ridiculous thing of all about your "Handelian" is that if you (as a Handel-lover) try to enlighten his ignorance, and enlist his sympathy on behalf of any Handel music beyond *Messiah*, he works himself up into a fine frenzy in defence of that immortal work, which you have never attacked.

The general reader may think I have drawn an exaggerated portrait of the British Handelian. Let me give a concrete example to the contrary.

At a competition festival I once had occasion to criticise the ponderous singing of Bach. I suggested that it was no use trying to sing Bach as they sang Handel. I criticised the Handelian big bow-wow, and pleaded for more suppleness of rhythm, more elasticity of phrasing, and less insistence on the first beat of every bar. In a subsequent class, in which the choirs sang Handel's *O praise the Lord with one consent*, I amplified my remarks and complimented the festival committee on choosing such a breezy bit of Handel, as a welcome change from the eternal

Messiah. I pleaded for a wider knowledge of Handel—the Handel of opera, the Handel of the suites and concertos, but above all of Handel the song-writer. I said he was the greatest of song-writers, and specifically mentioned the arias in *Hercules*, *Semele* and *Susannah* as worth the attention of young singers. Later, in the adjudication of an orchestral class, I commended Handel's suites and overtures to the attention of conductors, specifically mentioning the overtures to *Julius Cæsar* and *Belshazzar* as " jolly " items for amateur string players.

Could appreciation of Handel go farther than this? Nevertheless, for about a week the local press teemed with excited protests from frenzied " Handelians." In leaded type and heavy scare-lines, reporters (with tongue in cheek, no doubt) announced another " Attack on Handel "; and all because I had said (*a*) that exclusive performances of *Messiah* no more made you a Handelian than an exclusive diet of *Hamlet* made you a Shakespearean; (*b*) that the big bow-wow was not the way to sing Handel's choruses, and that to call that bogus British tradition " Handelian " was a misnomer.

In the light of such facts, the announcement (as this was being written) that Cambridge would produce *Semele* as an opera was a welcome one. It was doubly welcome to a generation that is hag-ridden with *Messiah*, *ad nauseam*, and which has forgotten—if it ever knew—that Handel wrote other master-works. Let us hope that the Cambridge lead will be widely followed, and that we shall see *Hercules* and similar works given as operas, too.

The score of *Semele* is just the thing for amateur operatic companies. It can be quite well performed with strings alone. Handel adds a couple of oboes in the choruses only; he uses the bassoons independently in only one number (the Introduction to Act III); trumpets only in the final chorus; and drums only in numbers 11, 14, 62, and 76. The rest of the accompaniments are for strings, or *basso continuo* (with or without the violin). Even if

amateur operatic conductors decide to use the whole of Handel's orchestra, they will be saved the expense of flutes, clarinets, horns, harps, and such like, to say nothing of the entire "kitchen furniture" save drums.

Great things frequently spring from small beginnings. It may be that the Cambridge experiment will have inaugurated a new era, when Handel will once again come into his own; when the militant *Messiah*-worshipper will be dismissed as the common nuisance that he really is; when a newer and wiser generation than ours will be free to enjoy the music of one of the greatest composers of any generation.

V

WHO WAS BATTISHILL ?

THE changes and chances of this mortal life come along so imperceptibly that few of us realise how important they have been until we fix our attention on some date in the past.

Twenty-six years ago Tschaikovsky was "a problem" (*vide* the press of that day). We knew not Mussorgsky; we had barely heard of Scriabin; we were hard at work discussing the uses or abuses of a Strauss. We were intrigued beyond measure by *Ein Heldenleben* and the *Symphonia Domestica.* The "old" critics were as stern as usual about eccentricity versus originality, and the "new" ones became hysterical over the domestic touch of Herr Strauss's baby splashing in its (symphonic) bath. "Strauss-and-Debussy" were still bracketed together as the last word in revolutionary lawlessness. The Queen's Hall "Proms" were only five years old; the "Selection" had not been banished from the second part of the programme. *Gerontius* was only a struggling babe whose voice was not heard in London until its second birthday. Both it and its composer were being freely strafed by a frankly obscurantist musical journal.

Holst and Vaughan Williams were youths; Bax, Bliss, Goossens and Howells were mere boys; the Joachim-Brahms clique was still in the saddle—riding for a fall it is true, but not yet unseated. University degrees in music still reeked of the organ-loft. Ecclesiastical musicians ruled the roost, and the musical press teemed with references to Thomas Attwood, Sir John Goss, Dr. Buck of Norwich, and "Miss Hacket, the choirboys' friend." About three times per annum we were regaled in the musical press with the story of how Sullivan and Stainer spent their choirboy half-holidays on the penny steamboats. About once a month we had stern censure of the stupid examiners who could not appreciate Wesley's "advanced" part-writing in *The Wilderness.* The catalogue of our leading music publisher contained eight anthems of William Byrd; 51

by Doctor Boyce; 40 by Doctor Greene; 69 by Professor Ouseley; and three by Elgar.

Grove's Dictionary gave 3½ columns to Elgar; four each to Donizetti and Catalani; and seven to Joachim and his quartet; Wagner received 65 columns, and Mendelssohn 135.

Such was our sense of proportion in those days.

Eheu fugaces! What musician of to-day cares a bean about Goss or Attwood? What musician has even so much as heard of "Miss Hacket, the choirboys' friend"? And yet a bare twenty years ago they were the stock-in-trade of musical journals. If neglected by editors, they were kept in due prominence by correspondents.

These reflections and reminiscences are suggested by the fact that Elgar once rearranged and edited an anthem of Battishill for a Worcester Festival. At that time quite a number of widely cultured musical people asked me, "Who is Battishill?" Twenty years ago such a remark would have invited the scorn of every musical mandarin. The questioner would have been set down as a hopeless ignoramus. His critics might glory in their ignorance of such impossible people as "Strauss-and-Debussy," but they knew all about Battishill, Boyce, Aldrich, Clarke-Whitfeld, Nares, Kent, Ebdon, Ouseley, Wise, Jeremiah Clark, Zachariah Buck, Doctor Maurice Greene, and the rest of the "Fathers of English Music."

It is no wonder that even in those days serious musicians grew tired of continual talk about mediocrities, and concerned themselves with the composers that really mattered. Still less wonder that when good and bad composers were indiscriminately bracketed (Battishill and Boyce, Gibbons and Greene), they should cry "A plague on all your houses," and consign good and bad alike to oblivion.

Now that "the Fathers of English Music" are a dead-letter in critical circles, it is possible to approach them in a spirit of detachment, and sift the chaff from the wheat. Elgar gave a lead in this direction, his eminent qualification for interesting himself in Battishill being that he is

PLATE V—JONATHAN BATTISHILL
[1738-1801]

a composer who is not a church organist, and is therefore unfettered by any traditions of the organ-loft. There is a quantity of English church music that is well worth revival, but the work of revival (to be effective, and critically sound) should be done by some of our musicians whose ideas are as broadly modern as Elgar's.

Battishill was an eighteenth-century church composer with a rather wider range of vision than most of his contemporaries, due no doubt to the fact that he was connected with the theatre and moved in a less restricted circle than that of the organ-loft. According to W. H. Husk's memoir, he was born in London in May 1738—the son of Jonathan Battishill, a solicitor, and grandson of the Rev. Jonathan Battishill, Rector of Sheepwash. He became a chorister of St. Paul's Cathedral in 1747, and (on the breaking of his voice) an articled pupil of the organist. His articles having expired, he assisted Dr. Boyce at the Chapel Royal, and wrote songs for Sadler's Wells Theatre. Later he was engaged as harpsichord player at Covent Garden; fell in love with and married Miss Davis, an actress and singer at that theatre, who retired from the stage on her marriage.

Battishill collaborated with Dr. Arne in the music of an opera called *Almena*, and in the same year (1764) he wrote music for a pantomime, *The Rites of Hecate*. These seem to be the only operatic works of his that have come down to us. He eventually abandoned the stage and occupied himself entirely with church music. About 1764 we find him as organist at St. Clement, Eastcheap, and in 1767 at Christ Church, Newgate Street. In 1771 he won the Catch Club prize for his Anacreontic glee *Come, bind my brows*. He was also a member of the Madrigal Society—which still survives and flourishes.

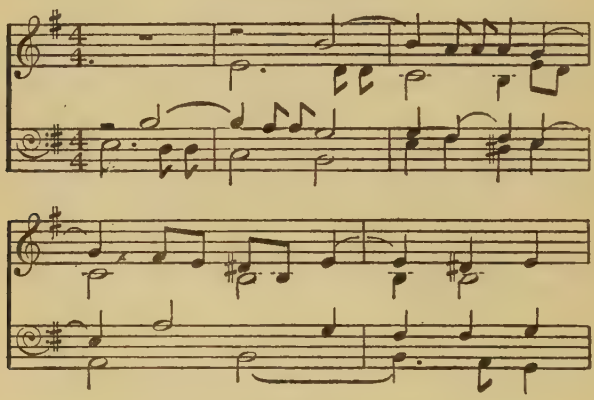
He was devoted to his wife, and her death in 1771 so affected him that he gave up composition and lived amongst his books, of which he had collected between six and seven thousand volumes, mainly classical works.

He died at Islington in 1801, and was buried in St. Paul's Cathedral.

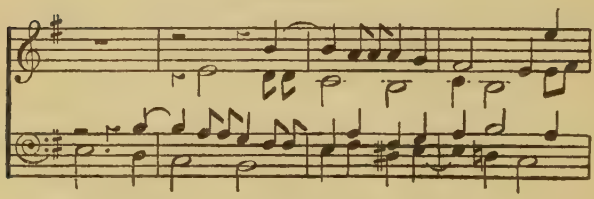
He will thus be seen to be not only a musician, but a more widely read and cultured man than most of his musical contemporaries. From one little fact which—so far—I have not seen noted elsewhere, he would seem to have been acquainted with the ancient musical classics as well as the more ancient "humanities."

I base this supposition on the further conjecture that he knew the works of Nanini. At least, if he did not, it is a most remarkable coincidence that the opening of his anthem *Call to remembrance* is almost identical with the opening of Nanini's *Diffusa est gratia*, except that Nanini writes for four and Battishill for five voices. Here are the two for reference. I have written both in the same pitch for easier comparison.

NANINI.



BATTISHILL.



I know that musical coincidences are dangerous tools for

the critic to play with. But in this case one cannot help noticing that Battishill's first movement, when he is developing this particular theme, is a noble and dignified effort. In the second movement (a trio), when he uses his own material, the falling-off is very marked.

VI

AN INTERVIEW WITH DAME ETHEL SMYTH

I HAVE never understood the precise difference between Bexhill, Herne Hill and Herne Bay. I am told that two of them are recognisable by the fact that they have never had Mr. " Jimmy " Glover as mayor. But no such clue is possible in the case of Woking and Wokingham. The only thing is to consult Bradshaw and try one's luck at Waterloo. My luck was in when I took a Sabbath's day journey thither on the very wettest day of a wet summer, which is saying a great deal. I found myself at Woking instead of Wokingham, which is (luckily) saying a great deal more.

I am ignorant of the language spoken by the inhabitants of the wilds, but I found it only necessary to hail a taxi, seize the differential sprocket, make a noise like a contrafagotto, and then be whisked through bosky dells to my destination. Perilous as are the corners at thirty miles an hour, they must have been spots of enchantment in the days when horse-drawn vehicles rounded them, opening up fresh vistas at every turn.

" Coign " is a beautiful little house on the edge of the golf links—and no neighbours within earshot to disturb midnight piano practice if you feel that way inclined. An ideal composer's house it is; bright, cheery, but restful rooms; no freak furniture, no highbrow hangings, no weird pictures. Everything radiates health and sanity, from the golf clubs in the hall to the workmanlike upright piano in the study, its top desecrated with no silly photograph frames, but piled with musical scores of every description.

Eminently business-like is the whole atmosphere of the house. Moira had barely divested me of hat and coat (at least " Moira " ought to be the name of a maid with such a delicious Wexford brogue) when I found myself in full flood of conversation with Dame Ethel herself, and in the middle of lunch before I had any time to think of any of the questions prepared in the train. And here it is up to

PLATE VI—DAME ETHEL SMYTH, MUS.DOC., D.B.E.

me to confess that no part of the conversation proceeded according to plan. We talked, and talked, and never a word of the business that brought me to Woking.

Moira proved an additional joy. She brings from Wexford the delightful Hibernian privilege of "butting in" to the conversation while waiting at table. "And hasn't the Doctor seen our dog yet?" I was obliged to reply in the negative. "Oh, but ye must see him." And through the opened door appears a hefty sheepdog of pure breed, with the woolliest coat and the most dignified bearing. In other houses even a doggy person like myself can have too much of the "love me, love my dog." It is not easy to carry on a serious conversation—let alone enjoy music—with importunate domestic pets struggling for attention. I wondered how I should fare when we got to the piano, but Ponto (I am sure his name should be Ponto) has perfect manners, and tactfully said *au revoir* to us at the study door.

I have—at different times—written sufficient about Dame Ethel to be recognised as a profound admirer of her work. On one point only have I not been able to see eye to eye with her—I mean, the subject of her long wait for recognition. She puts it down to a prejudice against women composers. I have hitherto put it down as one part vested interests and three parts sheer stupidity. But after our talk at Coign I am prepared to modify my preconceived opinion. I have met countless artists with a grievance, and tiresome people they are. But Dame Ethel is not of their number. They call heaven and earth to witness their wrongs. Dame Ethel merely gives you facts (chapter and verse in every case) logically marshalled and dispassionately stated. You may get emphasis, but never rancour. I have not yet met anyone so devoid of pettiness. She speaks forcibly on any point on which she is interested—her struggles and difficulties amongst the number—but she might be talking about the difficulties of someone else, so sanely detached is the manner of her telling.

Dame Ethel's career is rather wonderful. To realise that, we must get back to the period into which she was born. England had reached the nadir of her musical history. As late as the 'seventies we couldn't even open the Albert Hall without sending for Gounod to direct its music. While Dame Ethel was studying at Leipzig we were hailing "The Renascence of English Music," which only meant that a few privileged composers with the social pull monopolised the provincial Festivals to the exclusion of everyone outside the ring. No function at Gloucester, Worcester or Hereford was complete without a new work from their exclusive pens. These works were all hailed as masterpieces on their appearance, and then went to their long home of eternal rest on the publishers' shelves. Privileged composers and their followers wrote operas—all of them dead failures—but they were hailed as English Bachs and English Wagners all the same. Had Sullivan not become a popular hero with his Savoy operas, he would undoubtedly have been ousted from the conductorship of the Leeds Festival. As it happened, he was in a position to regard the intrigues with amused contempt.

In London (with the musical awakening of the populace) the ring was driven from one stronghold to another, till only the "Three Choirs" Festivals remained as a last refuge. There at least no composer outside the ring might apply. Dame Ethel had achieved a considerable reputation before submitting a work to the committee. Her covering letter was not even accorded the courtesy of a reply. She has had rather more than her share of the hope deferred that maketh the heart sick, but anything less like a sick person it would be difficult to conceive. She has not even become cynical. With the old eagerness unimpaired, she has acquired the serene confidence of the composer who knows when he has "found himself."

She showed me some interesting letters. We had a taste of Bruno Walter's quality at Covent Garden in 1924. His admiration of Dame Ethel's work is perhaps

not so well known. He was interviewed at the time, and wrote to her thus: "Of course I spoke in that interview of you . . . *but the reporter left that part out!* However, in another interview I am shortly having I shall say a thing or two (*einiges*) about you!" Dame Ethel's smile was more expansive than usual as she commented: "I suppose if Walter had raved about —— or —— or —— the reporter would have joyfully chronicled it all. I wrote to Walter: 'You don't know England, and I doubt if your next interviewer will think that part of your remarks worth reporting. If he doesn't, what will you conclude?'" She continued: "I know the faults of Germany, and the German people, but lack of musical appreciation isn't one of them. I was in Leipzig the year after the war. Its people carried about with them the look of despair, but their music was still their food. I sat for three and three-quarter hours in the *Thomaskirche* at a performance of Bach's *Passion.* In the interval (of only ten minutes) there were none of our handshakings, greetings to friends, small talk, and so on. If anyone did speak, it was gravely and quietly. And this was not a mere tribute of old people to the music of their youth, for I could look down on a sea of *young* faces, all rapt, all absorbed."

From this we drifted to a discussion on what constitutes religious music, and I naturally wanted to know what she now thinks of her Mass in D, which I have kept by me for so many years. "I agree that it isn't 'liturgical' in the sense in which you use the term," she said. "But it was written under the stress of a strong religious impulse. I felt that the words of the Mass best expressed what I wanted to say." And that is exactly how the work always struck me. It has not the note of aloofness and detachment that one looks for in Palestrina. Strong, forceful, sincere, it is emphatically a human document, and as such carries conviction. How wide-flung is its appeal will appear from this characteristic letter of Bernard Shaw which Dame Ethel allows me to print (suppressing one name, of course):

DEAR DAME ETHEL,

Thank you for bullying me into going to hear that Mass. The originality and beauty of the voice parts are as striking to-day as they were thirty years ago, and the rest will stand up in the biggest company. Magnificent!

You are totally and diametrically wrong in imagining that you suffered from a prejudice against feminine music. On the contrary, you have been almost extinguished by the dread of masculine music. It was your music that cured me for ever of the old delusion that women could not do men's work in art and other things (it was years ago, when I knew nothing about you, and heard an overture—*The Wreckers* or something—in which you kicked a big orchestra round the platform). But for you I might not have been able to tackle *Saint Joan*, who has floored every previous playwright. Your music is more masculine than Handel.

When have the critics and the public ever objected to feminine music? Did they object to Sullivan, whose music was music in petticoats from the first bar to the last? Can you name a more ladylike composer than the beloved and much imitated Mendelssohn? Does the very jolly sugar-stick called *A German Requiem* take you in because Brahms dabbed a little black on it and wrapped it up in crape?

You scorned sugar and sentimentality; and you were exuberantly ferocious. You booted —— contemptuously out of your way as an old woman. And now you say we shrank from you because you were "only a woman"!

Good God!

Yours, dear big brother,
G. BERNARD SHAW.

The time for my return train arrived with not a word about her operas that I had intended to occupy the best part of our conversation. For we both found at the outset that neither of us could talk "according to plan," and so I at least enjoyed one of the most stimulating experiences of a lifetime—a conversation that ranged over every imaginable field of music; desultory, if you like, but never flagging. Dame Ethel doesn't look on music from one

angle ; she is broad, but not diffuse ; holds strong opinions, but with great sympathy for the outlook of others. You never find her more tolerant than when she appears most emphatic. She has one of the best-balanced intellects that I know. She is sure where others are merely cock-sure. Her difficulties have left her buoyant, youthful and eager as ever, where others that I know have succumbed or become cynical and bitter.

VII

DAME ETHEL SMYTH AND THE ROMAN MASS

One of the best autobiographical books of the century is Dame Ethel Smyth's *Impressions that Remained*; not the least interesting part of it is that devoted to the history of her *Mass in D*, which eventually received a performance in the Albert Hall in March 1893 under Joseph Barnby. It was not performed again until 1924, and it was not till January 31st, 1925, that it was again given in the Albert Hall under the original conditions.

Having no fancy for sensational statements, I do not mind saying that the last-named performance was an event of national importance, which—in several respects—gave one much to think about.

Firstly, as to the actual rendering: the wicked acoustical properties of the Albert Hall were as devastating as usual, and few of the delicate details with which the score abounds came off. The orchestra was well-nigh inaudible in the choruses (at least from my seat). The ponderosity of the mammoth choir was a rather unhappy medium through which to make the acquaintance of the subtleties of Dame Ethel's work.

In spite of all this, I found myself able to listen with close attention to the first performance I had been able to attend of a work that has had an honoured niche in my library for twenty-five years.

In listening to works revived (as this one was) after an interval of over thirty years, one is usually conscious of the extent to which we may regard them as "dated." There is usually a sense of faded charms, like the odour of *patchouli*, or the pathetic sight of a Victorian rockery in a Kennington front garden.

Dame Ethel's Mass is not yet dated. That a work of such freshness and vigour should have been turned down by our ancesters of the 'nineties is a sardonic commentary on the intelligence of that epoch of literary decadence and musical preciosity. The "Joachim-Brahms clique," already alluded to, dominated London. Maestro Brahms was our

musical deity. The provincial Festivals were under the thumb of the aforesaid clique. As I said in the previous chapter, no composer outside the ring need apply at any of them. Dame Ethel's second request to be allowed a hearing at one of the Three Choirs Festivals elicited a cool request from the Festival "authorities" to furnish *testimonials* (!) as to her musical ability—when everyone outside the Sleepy-Hollow of that particular Cathedral Close knew that she was one of the only three English composers whose music was at that time being played on the Continent.[1]

However, "the whirligig of time brings in his revenges." Dame Ethel's thirty-years-old Mass had a successful revival, while the contemporary masterpieces of the 'nineties (each one hailed as immortal by the *claqueurs* of the clique) lie (as I have already said) in peaceful repose on their publishers' shelves, sleeping their last long sleep of death with no "joyful resurrection" in sight.

I attended the performance in my professional capacity as a musical critic, and of course—as all the world knows—musical critics never by any chance read each others' critiques. But in this case I plead guilty to a breach of professional etiquette. I read next morning as many press notices as I could lay hands on. So far as I was able to observe, they were mainly concerned with the surface qualities (I use the word in no derogatory sense) of the Mass. By "surface qualities" I mean musical form and structure; choral and orchestral balance and technique; emotional content; originality of conception, and so forth.

It is only when we have finished with all these things that we can apply ourselves to the more fundamental matter of *significance*.

The composer is here setting the text of the Roman Mass,

[1] Things have altered since then. A work of Dame Ethel's was performed at the Gloucester Festival of 1924.

and the significance of the setting is determined (one way or the other) by how far that text is used as a peg on which to hang the composer's personal conceptions and to express the emotional or æsthetic concepts in the composer's mind, or—on the other hand—how far the music is a presentation of the liturgical idea which the text represents.

Dame Ethel uses the text in the former sense, and the only setting (by a Briton) in the latter sense is—so far—that of Vaughan Williams, in his *Mass in G Minor* for twelve voices.

This is not to say that the one setting is superior to the other, or even that they bear comparison. It only means that both composers approach the text of the Mass from a different angle—Dame Ethel using it as an expression of personal and individual emotion, and Vaughan Williams employing it as a corporate presentment of the liturgical idea. Dame Ethel's Mass is intimate and personal, as befits a work composed under stress of an acute religious crisis. (We have her own word for it that this is so.) Vaughan Williams's Mass is aloof and impersonal, as befits a *corporate* expression of the liturgy. Dame Ethel's Mass approximates to those of Mozart, Beethoven, and the rest of the German followers of the Viennese School; Vaughan Williams's is in the manner of Palestrina and Byrd and the rest of the liturgical composers. Dame Ethel treats her text with the same freedom as a composer would treat any other *libretto;* Vaughan Williams observes all the liturgical rules laid down for the treatment of that text.

For these reasons Dame Ethel's Mass is eminently suited for concert performance rather than for liturgical use. Vaughan Williams's is ideal for liturgical purposes, and is bound to prove a failure under unliturgical conditions.

If I seem to have stressed these two points unduly, it is because—in this country, at least—they have never been recognised, much less differentiated. (I mean the

treatment of the text of the Roman Mass as a mere *libretto*, as opposed to its treatment as a liturgical adjunct.) But the difference between them is radical and fundamental.

That the text of the Latin Mass, together with that of the *Stabat Mater*, should have appealed to the imagination of composers of all creeds and all down the centuries, is a fact too well known to require comment. Treated as *libretti*, and as the expression of a composer's individuality, they have a natural and legitimate place on the concert platform. But when used as adjuncts to the liturgy, their very qualities become defects. They are foreign to the spirit of the Roman rite, and educated opinion, even amongst the general public, is beginning to note how incongruous is any conjunction of the two.

That this (what I call *symphonic*) type of Mass music (*e.g.* that of Mozart, Beethoven, etc.) has had a long vogue in churches since the time of Haydn and that it still persists in certain quarters is indisputable; but the causes of its intrusion are outside the scope of a musical book, and, moreover, the present writer enumerated them in the *Musical Times* some years ago.

Suffice it to say that the symphonic treatment of the Latin Mass—in which the *Kyrie*, *Gloria*, *Credo*, etc., are split up into separate musical "numbers" and laid out for solo, chorus and orchestra—is not a Roman, but a Lutheran innovation. But since the Lutheran lead was followed by all the European composers, from the great Haydn to the little Gounod, it is not surprising that British composers have taken these "symphonic" Masses to be the true models of what is required by the Roman rite, Vaughan Williams being the outstanding exception.

From the time of Bach onwards the Masses of the great composers became practically choral symphonies, and it would be a pity if that form of composition were abandoned by great composers of the future. But it ought to be made clear that the two forms of treating the Latin text, (*a*)

as a *libretto*, (*b*) as a liturgical adjunct, are fundamentally and diametrically opposed. There is room for both forms, each in its own *separate* sphere, but to change the *locale* of either is to produce a liturgical anachronism and to perpetrate an æsthetic crime.

VIII

A NOTE ON SCOTTISH MUSIC

In an historic book on Iceland there was a chapter headed "Snakes." The chapter consisted only of these words, "There are no snakes in Iceland." I hope patriotic Scotsmen will read me to the end before they become indignant when I say that although it would be untrue to say there is no music in Scotland, it is the truth to say that Scotland has no musical history. I know this sounds a very foolish remark concerning a country so exceptionally rich in folk-melodies. But it must be remembered that every country possesses folk-melodies in greater or less degree. We take folk-music for granted. It is on the constructive side that Scotland has next to no monuments to show. Even the enthusiast who contributes nearly fifteen pages on the subject to *Grove's Dictionary* can only give us the title of one piece of concerted music composed about 1530. During medieval times there is no doubt that the art of Plainsong was practised as assiduously in Scottish monasteries and abbeys as elsewhere; but when we come down to the polyphonic period of the sixteenth century, in which English composers were so prolific, we find no corresponding activity in Scotland. Of course, one must allow for the wholesale destruction of manuscripts at the Reformation, but the same thing happened in England, in spite of which an enormous mass of concerted music still remains.

In the seventeenth century, when our own Gibbons, Humphrey, Purcell and Blow flourished, no corresponding names have come down to us from North of the Tweed. In the eighteenth century, when English music, under the spell of Handel, entered upon its prolonged period of sterility, no musical composers of note appeared in Scotland either.

Whatever reliable records of Scottish music we possess, they are all in connexion with songs for a solo voice, and even the reliable records have been so overlaid with legend that the truth is too often difficult to reach. It is untrue

to say that the Scottish were an unmusical race, but outside the domain of folk-song they have achieved little as a nation.

Scottish folk-song is a remarkable product which would require many volumes in order to deal with it adequately. All that one need here note is the striking difference between Lowland tunes and those of the Gaelic Highlander. The former are, no doubt, full of character, but, like those on the other side of the Border, they continually show traces of English, Irish and French influence. The Highland tunes belong to a different category. They have a distinct character of their own, uninfluenced by other nationalities. A study of them as restored by Mrs. Kennedy Fraser reveals to us what a wealth of poetry and imagery was within an ace of being lost to the world for ever. As time goes on, we shall begin to realise that these hitherto neglected Highland tunes have qualities exceeding even the fervour of the Jacobite songs with which we have always been familiar. I need not go into details, as both the above-named types are in print in considerable quantity and can be studied at leisure. The point that one wishes to emphasise is that most of the "gude auld Scotch sangs" which one hears at every Scottish gathering are of no earlier date than Rabbie Burns. *Scots wha hae; I'm wearin' awa'! Jean; John Anderson, my Jo; Ye banks and braes o' bonnie Doon; Wandering Willie; Of a' the airts the wind can blaw*, and so forth, are merely modern words set by Burns to old tunes previously in existence, having as little connexion with the originals as had Moore's words with the Irish melodies he appropriated. Burns's words are real poetry; the tunes are real music of an inspired type; but the songs themselves are as much a hybrid as are "Moore's Irish Melodies."

It is a little curious that none of the panegyrics on Scottish music contains any mention of one Scottish composer whom we can really place in the front rank—Robert Johnson. He was born at Dunse, near Berwick-upon-

Tweed, and flourished in the middle of the sixteenth century. MS. compositions of his are to be found in the British Museum, at Tenbury, at the Royal College of Music, at Edinburgh, and in the Bodleian Library, but only one motet of his has as yet appeared in print. Even when compared with the work of his contemporaries—Tallis, Tye, Taverner, etc.—his counterpoint is distinguished by a vigour and polish which entitle him to be included in their company. Johnson was a priest, and those compositions of his which have come down to us are all for church use. His ecclesiastical career appears to have been somewhat chequered. At any rate, he was delated as a heretic and fled to England. In a MS. in the British Museum (Addl. 33933, folio 66) a setting of Johnson's motet, *Domine in virtute tua*, contains this note: "Set in ingland be ane Scottis priest, being diletit to have beine ane heretyke fled thair land before reformation; thomas hutsons fay(ther) now wyth ye King kend him." It is also said (on what authority I do not know) that he became chaplain to Anne Boleyn. The most important work of his which has come down to us is the motet *Ave Dei Patris filia*, the lengthy text of which appears to have been a great favourite with the principal English composers. Portions of it are in several libraries, but it occurs complete in the Bodleian (MS. Mus. e. 1–5). In the Bodleian, of course, the separate parts are in separate books. The motet appears in score in an eighteenth-century MS. in the British Museum (Addl. MSS. 5059), but it has been transcribed very imperfectly. The work is in seven movements, for three, three, five, five, three, four, and five voices respectively. The counterpoint is free and melodious, especially in the concluding section. Another work of Johnson—possibly of an earlier date, if one is to judge by the rather more formal character of the counterpoint—is a five-part setting of the psalm *Domine in virtute tua* (British Museum, Addl. MSS. 30480–4).

Burney, in his *History of Music*, prints a setting for

five voices of the Easter Respond, *Dum transisset Sabbatum*, in which Johnson has woven highly elaborate and effective counterpoint around the Plainsong melody bearing the above title. A second setting (for four voices) of the same words by "Mr. Johnson" is to be found in the British Museum (Addl. MSS. 17802–5); to my mind, this is the most effective work of all. Opposite is a page from the first tenor Part-book. I sometimes wonder how many Scotsmen have even heard the name of this distinguished composer, whose music holds its own with that of his foreign contemporaries.

Although Scottish characteristics naturally appear in the work of modern Scottish composers, the music which they have produced belongs less to Scotland than to that greater world which knows no national boundaries. Chief among these is, of course, Sir Alexander Mackenzie. We have grown so accustomed to him as the head of a great musical institution, and as the composer of well-known pieces such as the *Britannia* Overture, that we are apt to forget him as one of those who shaped and fashioned the renascence of English music in the 'eighties. I have frequently referred in print to his two operas—*Colomba* (produced in 1883) and *The Troubadour* (produced in 1886), together with my impression that although *Colomba* was more or less of a success and *The Troubadour* a distinct failure, the music of the "failure" was better than that of the "success."

When they were produced, the term "Wagnerian" was still a synonym for whatever the many-headed public did not understand. Applied to a British composer, it meant that although he might be a dangerous sort of person, we were secretly pleased that a native musician could do the trick and place himself in the same street with the daring revolutionary of the Villa Wahnfried, just the same as to-day, when we rail at some of our moderns, but are secretly pleased when the native product succeeds in out-Stravinsky-ing Stravinsky. We were not too deeply

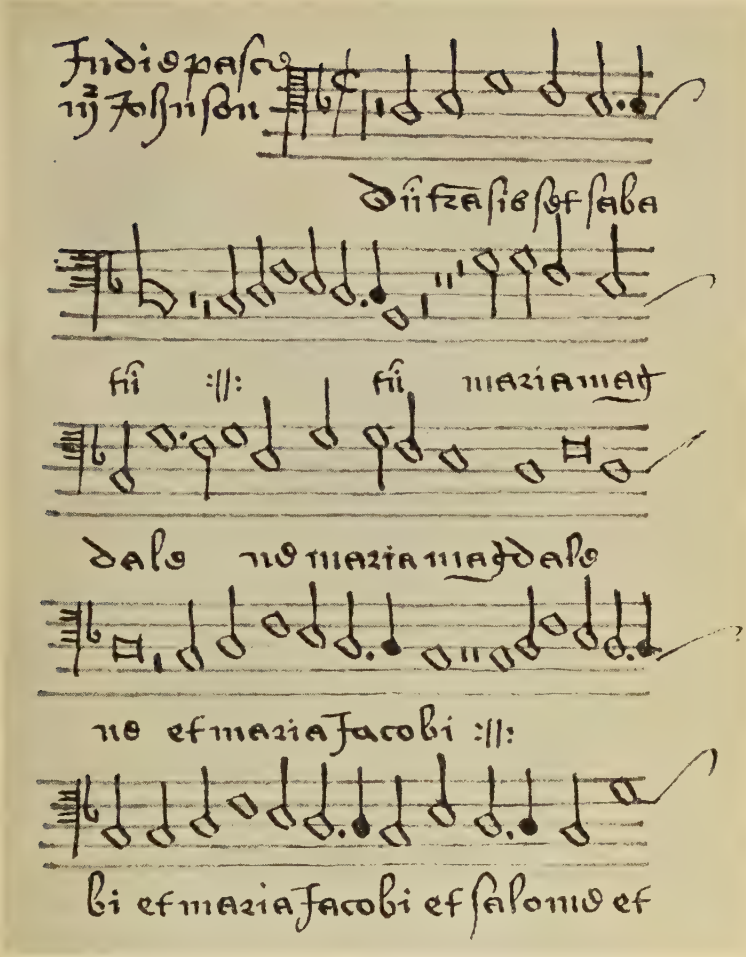


PLATE VII—MS. OF ROBERT JOHNSON

critical in those days, and any composer could earn the title "Wagnerian" provided he sprinkled accidentals on his page with sufficient lavishness. In his latest opera, at any rate, Mackenzie gave us plenty of accidentals, and set us contemplating his "Wagnerism" to such tune that we overlooked the Mackenzie behind it all.

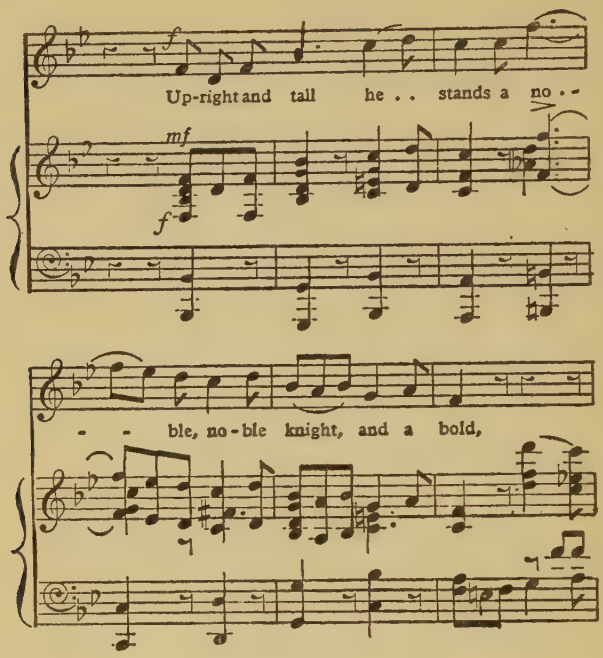
I was a mere boy when *Colomba* was produced, and when I had grown up, a school friend produced a letter I had written to him in 1883 saying that a fine new opera had been produced by "a Mr. A. C. Mackenzie"; that "it was very Wagnerian, but there are some fine climaxes." The "but" is indicative of the rapidity with which the schoolboy was assimilating the standard *clichés* of contemporary musical criticism.

By the time *The Troubadour* was produced I considered myself no end of a grown-up person in music. Frankly, I was ravished by the opera, and though riper years brought with them a more considered judgment upon it, the old glamour still—for me—hangs about it, and I continually wonder how far my state of mind is due to early associations and how much to the music.

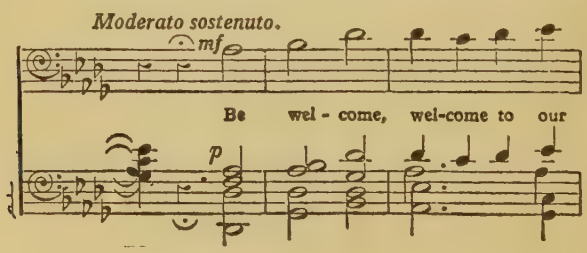
We must remember the barren period when it first saw the light, and that is why—even to-day—judged by the standard of contemporary opera, I seem to find it head and shoulders above the work of anyone else in that line at that time. I am so curious to test the matter that I take the unusual course of quoting from this now unknown work, and asking readers whether (after comparing it with other British operas of the period) it deserves the oblivion meted out to it. Of course, the plot was sufficiently naughty to shock the smug Britisher of the 'eighties, and consequently there are big patches of dullness in the music. But I cannot help thinking that if the whole libretto were re-written, and the score condensed, the work would be found rather wonderful for the period at which it was written. But of that, my readers must be the judges.

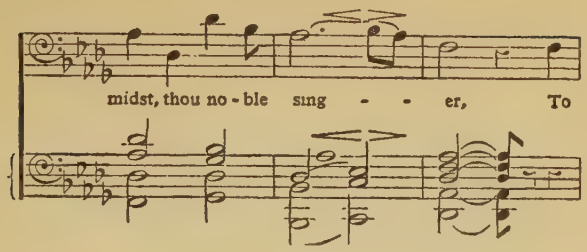
The story is too long to tell here, but the purchase of a copy at Novello's would reveal the plot.

Take the first scene, when the crowd acclaims the approach of the troubadour:

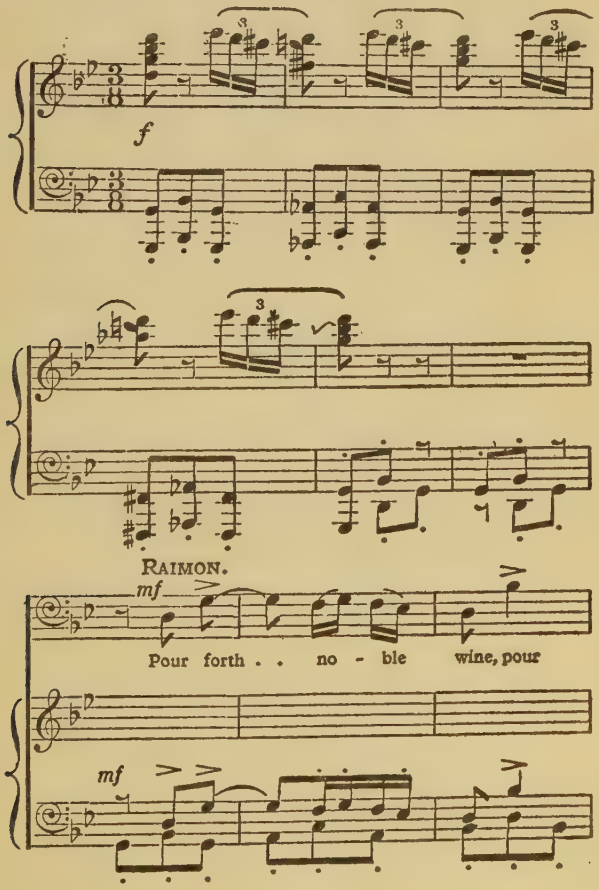


I fancy this is as vigorous and appropriate as we should hear in the popular operas of to-day. Equally appropriate seems to me the welcome of the troubadour by the Count:





And—so I imagine—the music of Raimon's song (after he has accomplished his fell purpose) is sufficiently sinister to create the grim atmosphere proper to the scene :



forth, ... pour . . forth! As

8va

L.H. f

break-er of grief thou art known, thou art known, . .

pp f

And there is surely enough dramatic point in the following (from the introduction to Act III), where the company is setting out for the feast at Liet :

ben marcato.

f sempre.

Naturally I have had to omit quotations of the really big numbers. My immediate point is to present quite unimportant extracts as an indication of the general character of the work, since they—as much as the great numbers—give a clue to the standard of Mackenzie's opera as compared with that of his contemporaries.

The songs are, perhaps, as noteworthy as any other part of the opera. *The sunray's shine*, which Guillem sings in the first act, was possibly inspired by the *Prieslied*, but it certainly is not an imitation. *In the places of lightless sorrow*, sung by the distracted Margarida, has a wistfulness that is very haunting. Of course in a Troubadour opera one must have an *Alba* or *Dawn Song*, sung by the inevitable watcher on the tower, and I venture to think that my readers will admit Mackenzie's specimen to be beautifully conceived. I may be biased, but it has always been a matter for surprise to me that some items out of the copious supply of ballet music have not found their way on to the concert stage. I fancy that having once condemned it as an opera with a "naughty" libretto, Mrs. John Bull and her daughters determined that it should be boycotted, and that a boycott on purely unmusical grounds lasted long enough to insure the present generation (emancipated from Victorian middle-class smugness) knowing nothing about the work.

We must not forget that the commonplaces of to-day were the daring innovations of yesterday, and from that point of view Mackenzie was a breaker of fresh ground in British opera. It was a new thing in the 'eighties to discard the set aria, and to use the orchestra as something more than a mere accompaniment. An orchestral undercurrent with themes of its own that blended with those of the voices was commonly supposed to be the special prerogative of Wagner, then only becoming known in England. Of course even Puccini did the trick, but in Mackenzie's time we knew only the foursquare Verdi—the Verdi of *Rigoletto*, not of *Falstaff* or *Othello*. Conse-

quently I remember the thrill one got with Mackenzie's contemplative orchestral setting at the point where the Troubadour—in somewhat monotonous recitative—is reading from a book the fateful story of Lancelot and Guinevere. It was all new to us then, for we had heard but little Wagner. The advanced critics of that day said the love-scene was *Tristan* in English dress. But the point is that a Scottish composer did strike out a new line. It required boldness and originality in those days, so who are we to withhold our tribute ?

The late Hamish MacCunn, known to the present generation by his early orchestral work, *The Land of the Mountain and the Flood,* and his opera *Jeanie Deans*, was a brilliant young musician, who, however, did not live to fulfil his early promise. The late Learmount Drysdale's orchestral work *Tam-o'-Shanter* showed him to be a musician of many gifts, and his early death was a great loss to Scottish music. Although J. B. McEwen is not a prolific composer, his fine *Solway Overture* is sufficient (independent of the rest of his musicianly work) to place him amongst front-rank ones. But if Scotland has not taken a leading place among the nations in the domain of creative music, her sons are to be found practising the art in all its branches with conspicuous success. In her great centres of population the standard of musical performance is a high one; and in the matter of Festival Competitions I have never heard more distinguished performances of choral music than those of a recent gathering of this sort in Glasgow.

I must not conclude a Scottish chapter without at least one lapse into the Doric. Since the advent of the Kailyard School this has become obligatory :

Frae fremd folk onything in the way o' whully-whaing concernin' oorsels is no tae be expectit. But o' a' the daft havers that ever cam frae a doited donnart loon wi' a wamefu' o' bavardage, commend me tae the wee prick-me-dainty Southron wha (the tither day) wad fain threep it up tae me that when Scotland took a scunner at the kist-

PLATE VIII—SIR ALEXANDER MACKENZIE IN 1886
(The year "The Troubadour" was produced)

o'-whustles she wasna' reformin' her music ava', but aiblins just slaisterin' in the fushionless skink o' popery.

Which, being decoded, amounts to this: A Scottish friend was one day lamenting to me the decay of unaccompanied Psalmody through the intrusion of organs into the Kirk. I agreed with him, although his standpoint was theological and mine exclusively musical. He was under the impression that in reverting to the pure human voice, and abjuring instruments, the Kirk had thrown away the last rag of popery. When I disputed this, he was inclined to be indignant, but his native humour soon took in the Gilbertian situation, which is this:

Whatever the results in practice, in theory the music of the Roman Rite is always supposed to be exclusively vocal. When instruments are mentioned, they are always spoken of as being "permitted." In the Pope's private chapel (the "Sistine") not a note from the kist-o'-whustles or any other instrument has ever been heard. So that in her long resistance to instrumental accompaniment of Psalmody, Scotland (so far from "casting off the last rag of popery") was, in fact, the one Protestant country which—all unwittingly—perpetuated a distinctively "popish" tradition.

Like Nonconformist Wales, Presbyterian Scotland is to-day forsaking the noble traditional tunes of her forefathers, and filling her hymn-books with the Victorian sentimentalities of *Hymns Ancient and Modern.*

Like English Psalmody, its Scottish counterpart has suffered from the rigid limitations imposed by an unvarying four-lined iambic metre (technically known as Ballad Metre, or Common Metre), and lacks the freedom of the German and Genevan types with their rich variety of metres and their masculine and feminine endings. Nevertheless, the old tunes have a noble dignity, and such grand specimens as *Drumclog*, *Dundee* and *Martyrs* will endure for all time.

IX

A NOTE ON HANDEL'S "SEMELE"

I CANNOT approach this subject without a few solemn, preliminary, and irrelevant-looking quotations. Apparent inconsequence is often the truest relevancy.

The late "J. F. R.," of the *Saturday Review*, once wrote an article on Handel, in which he said:

> I tell this story (of *Susanna*) to show what the British public will put up with if you mention the word oratorio. Voltaire's dictum needs revision thus: "Whatever is too improper to be spoken (in England) is sung; and whatever is too improper to be sung on the stage may be sung in a church."

The late Professor Ebenezer Prout, B.A., in the Novello edition of *Semele*, wrote:

> Handel's *Semele* is, like the same composer's *Hercules*, a secular oratorio. The libretto was originally written as an opera book by Congreve, but, being found unsuitable for the stage, was converted by some slight alterations into an oratorio.

The late Mr. Congreve, poet (1670–1729), wrote the libretto of *Semele* which Handel set to music as an opera. He also wrote a delicious introduction giving the plot, from which I extract the following:

> *After* Jupiter's *Amour with* Europa, *the Daughter of* Agenor, *King of* Phaenicia, *he again incenſes* Juno *by a new Affair in the ſame Family*; viz. *with* Semele, *Niece to* Europa, *and Daughter to* Cadmus *King of* Thebes. Semele *is on the Point of Marriage with* Athamas; *which Marriage is about to be ſolemniz'd in the Temple of* Juno, *Goddeſs of Marriages, when* Jupiter *by ill Omens interrupts the Ceremony;* and *afterward tranſports* Semele *to a private Abode prepar'd for her.* Juno, *after many Contrivances, at length assumes the Shape and Voice of* Ino, *Siſter to* Semele; *by the help of which Diſguiſe, and artful Inſinuations, she*

prevails with her to make a Requeſt to Jupiter, *which being granted muſt end in her utter Ruin.*

This Fable is related in Ovid. Metam. L. 3 *but, there,* Juno *is ſaid to impoſe on* Semele *in the Shape of an old Woman, her Nurſe. 'Tis hoped, the Liberty taken in ſubſtituting* Ino *inſtead of the old Woman will be excus'd: It was done, becauſe* Ino *is interwoven in the Deſign by her Love of* Athamas; *to whom she was marry'd, according to* Ovid; *and, becauſe her character bears a Proportion with the Dignity of the other Perſons repreſented. This Reaſon, it is preſumed, may be allowed in a Thing intirely fictitious; and more eſpecially being repreſented under the Title of an* Opera, *where greater Abſurdities are every Day excus'd.*

The late Professor Sir George Alexander Macfarren, Mus.Doc., in an article in the *Musical Times* of June 1873, wrote:

Theodora was first performed in Covent Garden Theatre, on Friday, March 16, 1750. . . . On being told that a city gentleman intended to buy up all the boxes for the third representation, Handel exclaimed: "He is a fool then, for the Jews will not come to it as they did to *Judas Maccabæus*, because it is a Christian story, and the ladies will not, because it is a virtuous one."

Herewith an improving story: In the reign of good Queen Victoria a certain undergraduate took his maiden aunt to a performance of *Agamemnon.* After everybody had murdered everybody else, and Clytæmnestra had entered the palace with her paramour, the undergraduate asked the aunt how she liked the performance. She replied: "I suppose it is all right, dear. But, oh, *how* different from the home life of *our own* dear Queen."

One more story: Among my native Northumbrian hills lies the town of Allendale. When a branch railway line was first run out to it, it stopped short at a hamlet named Catton, a mile and a half from the town.

For years Allendale townspeople endured not only the hardship of winter-night trudges from Catton along dark

and storm-swept roads, but also the added indignity of Catton villagers having a station while Allendale townsfolk had none.

For years the Railway Company was deaf to Allendale's appeals for a railway-station, but eventually it granted their petition by the simple expedient of painting out the word "Catton" at the terminus, and painting in the word "Allendale." So to-day Allendale has its own station, and poor little Catton has none. (Eh? "What about the wintry trudges?" you say. Oh, that has nothing whatever to do with the story.)

One final quotation (from the *Oxford English Dictionary*):

> ORATORIO, *noun.* A semi-dramatic musical composition on a sacred theme, performed by soloists, chorus, and orchestra, without action, scenery, or costume.

So now, I trust, the relevance of my farrago is apparent. Handel conceived *Hercules*, *Semele*, *Susanna*, *Theodora*, and so on, in terms of opera. The eighteenth century was not hypocritical; the nineteenth was. Eighteenth-century ladies were antagonised by virtuous plots; nineteenth-century ladies by naughty ones. Eighteenth-century ladies were bored by virtuous *Theodoras*; nineteenth-century ladies were shocked by the promiscuity of Jove and the "goings on" of the Elders. Eighteenth-century ladies were logical, and stayed away from *Theodora*; nineteenth-century ones were hypocritical and wanted badly to hear both *Semele* and *Susanna*. But the theatre was a wicked, worldly place in which to listen even to *Theodora*, so what were the poor things to do?

The solution was simple, though history is silent as to whom we owe it. Just as "Freddy" became "Archibald" in Mr. Weedon Grossmith's famous production); and Geo. Grossmith's "Polka" became a "choirboy"; and Catton became Allendale by the naïve expedient of re-christening; so did naughty opera become nice oratorio by the same process. In the sacred precincts of Exeter

Hall, nineteenth-century ladies could listen to *Semele* without a word of its original operatic text being changed, for it had been re-christened "oratorio," and does not the *Oxford Dictionary* assure us that oratorio themes are sacred in character? The conjugal infelicities of Jove no longer brought a blush to the virtuous cheek, for you could always point a moral by comparing favourably the home life of our own Royalties with that of their classical prototypes.

Was ever such an infantile subterfuge heard of outside the nineteenth century or the walls of Colney Hatch? Do not think I exaggerate, for in the current issue of the English publisher's catalogue you will find *Hercules*, *Semele*, *Susanna* and *Theodora* all described as oratorios.

We live now in the twentieth century, and our womenkind are neither prigs nor prudes. They do not consider the opera-house a worldly place, and they have sense enough to see that if Ovid stories are good enough for small boys to construe at school, they are good enough to be set to music, and the result is harmless enough for mammas and sisters to enjoy without the make-believe of calling it "oratorio."

X

THE INCURIOUS LONDONER

Not the least of the wonders of London is the folk that dwell therein. My business friends (since I have no knowledge of finance) give me to understand that London is the clearing-house of the financial world. It needs no knowledge of music for anyone to see that it is the clearing-house of the musical world; at least so far as performers are concerned. The finest singers, the greatest players of the Continent, have to put up with a merely respectable income until they have made their *début* in London. Only when armed with this *imprimatur* can they demand the colossal salaries which turn them from conscientious and struggling artists into the capricious stars who lord it over us after the manner of their kind.

The trouble is that we do not see things immediately under our noses. We overlook the clearing-house aspect of metropolitan music, and out of nothing more than sheer apathy subscribe to the accepted belief that London is a musical centre—a fount and source of music, in fact.

In one sense it is, but in another it most emphatically is not.

It is no small thing that we can command the greatest performers that the world can produce. We can enjoy the continuous stream of first-rate performances that they give us. No other city can compete with us in that respect, unless it be New York. Absence from London—however short—creates a void that emphasises the privileges which are ours, and quickens the eagerness with which we return to the fray and revel again in the world of musical life that goes on year in and year out just as before. We take up our musical life just where we left it, and just as naturally as though we had never left it.

"Just as before." There is the crux of the whole matter. We attend concerts and recitals by the most celebrated performers, and just because the standard of performance is super-excellent we are drugged into complacent enjoyment and are content. We forget—even if the thought ever

did occur to us—that we are mere listeners, and that mere listening never yet made a musical nation. One nation of to-day furnishes the finest and most patient listeners in the world, but no one would libel it by calling it musical.

I believe the British to be a musical nation, but it is not the habit of listening to music that has made them one. The listening habit cannot be dispensed with. It makes for a fuller and completer musical life, but it is only one of the factors that go to make up that complete life.

So we may well inquire whether London—with all its magnificent performances, with all its faithful listening public—may truly be called a source of musical life, a fount of musical inspiration, a centre of musical development.

Too often, I am afraid, we have found it the precise opposite.

We attract a continuous flow of the finest performers, but does it ever strike us how limited is the repertoire with which they provide us, or how monotonous it becomes to listen to this limited repertoire year after year? If the range of music to which we so patiently listen were as wide as the performers are big, we should indeed live in a musical paradise. But it isn't, and we don't. The stereotyped character of the star programmes is too notorious to need description. Our metropolitan attitude towards music is receptive and appreciative without doubt, but mere passive receptivity never furthered any cause.

This passive receptivity to whatever the gods (or the foreigner) send us has become a characteristic of the Londoner, stifling initiative, paralysing action, and (in the case of music) atrophying the critical sense. We have become so strangely incurious a folk that however much we may desire the new or the unknown, we never think of stretching out our hand for it. We wait until some more enterprising spirit hands it out to us over the footlights.

"The man who made London walk" in 1924 is forgotten. In most other countries he would have been

mobbed on sight. "The troubles of Ireland" with its four millions of people have rung through the world. "The troubles of London" (and goodness knows they are real enough), with double the population of the Emerald Isle, are endured with patience and docility.

Nowhere is this docile spirit shown more than in the matter of music. The thousands who attend the Promenade Concerts do so because good music interests them. But their docile good-nature is shown in the way they receive it. An indifferent singer (or, worse still, a good singer singing an indifferent song) gets the same thunderous applause as is handed out to Sir Henry Wood's most inspired efforts.

One may fairly ask—Does London take a real initiative in musical affairs? Is it London that gives a fair proportion of recognition to the British composer? Elgar had to wait for the *imprimatur* of a Rhine festival before London troubled its head about him. Ask any agent what is the box-office value of a new British composition. When that composition has secured recognition abroad or in the provinces we certainly do take it to our bosom and probably give better performances than it would receive elsewhere. But ask Sir Henry Wood what encouragement he has received in the matter of "novelties" by British composers each August, and I imagine his reply would be highly instructive.

The truth is that the progress of British music depends more than we think on ideas generated outside London. The British composer gets the most consistent support at centres like Bournemouth. The idea of a British opera that should be something more than a pale copy of foreign models was generated at Glastonbury and worked out at Woking. The idea that concerted music has a wider appeal than mere solos by *virtuosi* has been developed at provincial competitive festivals to a greater extent than in London. The idea that solos with pianoforte accompaniment are not the be-all and end-all of music has been

developed at rural competitive festivals to a greater extent than in London.

The Londoner does eventually respond to a new idea, but someone else has to think it out for him first, just as the "Three Choirs" Festivals constituted themselves the special champions of Elgar after Landon Ronald and Dan Godfrey had done the spade-work for them in consolidating that composer's position.

London is a wonderful place; London music is a wonderful thing. But that London makes the most of its unique opportunities or contributes its proper quota to our national music would be difficult of proof. The spirit of creativeness and enterprise is too often lacking. Provincial centres too frequently break fresh ground while London is content to move in the old ruts. In provincial newspapers one comes across discerning musical criticism from comparatively unknown critics. In London we have brilliant critics of front-rank reputation condemned to the mill-horse round of concert reporting.

How long will it be before Londoners begin to take heed of the joints in their musical armour?

XI

A MATTER OF PUBLIC INTERPRETATION

If one were disposed to be humorous, it would be an easy task to make merry at the expense of the Britisher and his music. But there is an element of tragedy in the way in which he has placed his neck under the foreign yoke for so many centuries, and with humble docility has only enjoyed such forms of music as the foreigner provided him with. Having allowed the foreigner to decide what music was best for him, it was only logical that he should allow the foreigner the sole right of interpreting such music. If, in the past, poor John Bull ever did produce such a freak as a musical composer, it was only right that he should understand that his duty lay in imitating the foreign classics, as far as in him lay. The idea that there ever was a period in John's national history when he produced music of any consequence was too absurd for consideration. For had not the foreigner told him that there never was such a thing as English music? So firmly rooted in the mind of John Bull was this disbelief in the capacity of his countrymen either to create or to interpret music, that if a singer or instrumental performer ever did achieve eminence, it was only after camouflaging his British patronymic and becoming known as Signor This or Herr That.

All this is so Victorian and so universally gibed at to-day that one would think the Press to be right in scornfully referring to it as a thing of the past. Well, so it is, so far as our Irish Foleys calling themselves Signor Foli, or our John Smiths styling themselves Johannes Hackenschmidt are concerned. But so far as I can see, there is as yet little change in the most important aspect of the whole business—namely, the matter of interpretation.

But there is another side to the question almost as prominent, and that is the exact amount of knowledge which the foreigner considered it good for us to have of musical literature.

Taking the latter point first, one has only to do a round of the concert-rooms to find the old musical curriculum

imposed upon us by the Germans in full swing to-day. *Débutant* after *débutant* gives us the same stale old repetitions of Beethoven, Schumann, Chopin and Liszt. If he is very much up-to-date he will add large chunks of Brahms, with a little Bach thrown in to show how broad are his sympathies. And so the dreary game goes on. Music-making having been driven out of our national life, and having become, not an intimate personal thing, but an affair of concerts (of which we can only attend a limited number in the course of a lifetime), we never get to know, as a whole, either Beethoven, Chopin or Bach. Musically, we are in the same plight as that of a person of literary tastes whose booklore has been limited to such snippets from the classics as he could glean by attendances at plays or platform recitations.

With all our national potentialities in music we have been content to live in an atmosphere of make-believe, where words and phrases have taken the place of things. When our child at school has the inevitable perfunctory pianoforte lessons, we call that "learning music." When a person has acquired the concert-room habit, we include him amongst "musical people." If he has sufficient pianoforte technique to attempt home performances of what he has heard in the concert-room, we call him "very musical." Would we ever court ridicule by describing as "very literary" anyone who retailed in the home circle such stock "recitations" as he had heard in the public halls? We should laugh outright at the idea of anyone making pretensions to literature who did not know his authors from end to end. And yet we have not only amateurs, but professional recitalists, receiving credit as interpreters of this or that composer, when all they do in reality is to ring the changes on a few stock pieces.

The fact is that we shall never be musical in the real sense of the word until music becomes a part of our life, and not a mere affair of attendance at concerts in public and playing the piano in private.

However heretical your conventionalist may think it, I believe that the first step towards making music a part of our life will be effected by means of the mechanical piano-player. I had a significant illustration of this a little while back. A young doctor who played the piano quite well as a youth found the calls of his profession a definite bar to pianoforte practice. As he could not live without music of some sort, he purchased a mechanical player, and kept on extending his acquaintance with every one of the classical composers. I spent one evening in the company of himself and a pianoforte recitalist who was the idol of his own particular public. When the inevitable musical discussion arose on Bach, Beethoven, Schumann, Chopin, Brahms, Liszt, Wagner, and even Debussy, Ravel, etc., it soon became evident that my medical friend had a sound working knowledge of the whole of them, and the professional pianist an abysmal ignorance of everything they had written, save the stock pieces which he played at his recitals. The doctor knew his Bach Pianoforte Concertos backwards; the recitalist had never played one in public in his life. And yet, I suppose, the latter would be called a musician, and the former a mere amateur.

So much for the concert-room habit as an educational factor. But there is an equally serious side to it in the matter of interpretation. Concert-going has so long been considered as an affair of attendance not to hear this or that composer, but this or that performer, that the average person's opinions (such as they are) on any composer have been merely reflections of what he heard in the concert-room. Like all other public idols, the concert-room performer has been less concerned with interpreting the mind of the composer than in executing feats with which to make his audience sit up and take notice. With the recitalist it became less and less a question of what Beethoven meant by the *Appassionata* than how many startling and individual effects he could import into it. Such recitalists as could—either by their brilliant technique or their

personal mannerisms—dominate all others eventually became the "recognised exponents" of their particular composer. Lesser recitalists faithfully copied them till at length we got to the stage of "traditional readings," which, if hunted to earth, mean nothing more than the private stunt of some prominent performer. Nothing was too eccentric to secure instant recognition so long as the performer was a foreigner. No composer has suffered worse in this respect than Chopin. His waltzes, mazurkas and polonaises, if danced to (and I have seen them danced to in pre-foxtrot days), are the most deliciously rhythmic things in music. Played in the concert-room they resemble nothing so much as the staggering gait of the midnight reveller making his way from lamp-post to lamp-post. Never a phrase is allowed to speak for itself; each one is tortured out of all semblance to any rhythm it originally possessed. But here, again, our passion for words instead of things enables us to maintain our complacency. We utter the blessed word *rubato* and think that we have explained everything. We have done nothing of the sort. Bad rhythm is bad rhythm all the world over. And we cannot make it into good rhythm by calling it rubato, or Mesopotamia, or Missolonghi, or any other soul-comforting word.

XII

"CONDUCTED BY THE COMPOSER"

THIS familiar announcement on concert programmes holds various and varied interpretations, according to whether the interpreter is a member of the general public or one of the initiate.

If the performance is an orchestral one, the uninitiated person looks for something superior in the way of rendering. If he does not get it, he blames the band.

But the *cognoscenti* in musical affairs go to such performances in pleasing uncertainty or downright trepidation (the ratio of either being in proportion to inside knowledge) as to whether the rendering will be up to scratch or not.

In other words—one class of listener expects a better performance, and the other a worse, than would be given by recognised orchestral conductors. In the laws of art there is nothing which ought necessarily to make one hypothesis any more probable than the other; but the laws of nature have a habit of obtruding themselves in a disconcerting fashion that upsets all the recognised rules of any other game.

Your all-round sportsman is deserving of universal admiration; but you would not (if you were prudent) back him for a first place in the Grand National, or the Monte Carlo pigeon-shooting, or the Colquhoun Sculls. Even your Double Blue is a rare bird, whose rarity is emphasised by the high salary he can command for instructing public-school youth in such side-issues as the classics.

All of which is only a roundabout way of saying that if nature gives a man one supreme gift, she is as a rule remorseless in denying him equal supremacy in any other. She may allow him high efficiency, but that is quite another story.

Some of our composers exhibit high efficiency as conductors, but this efficiency must always be on a lower plane than their creative genius. Should a composer ever exhibit equal gifts as a conductor, Nemesis swiftly overtakes him; we then class him amongst conductors, and his day as a

composer is over. Liszt is a case in point. He showed at different times equal brilliance in several branches of music; we were never able to place him exactly. Had he been one or the other, a virtuoso or composer, we should have decided how to class him. As it was, his virtuosity resulted in an undue neglect of his compositions. (Of course, one does not include in this category his pianistic show-pieces.)

So, after all, it is the cynics who have it, when composer-conductors are in question. Their chances of being agreeably disappointed are always sufficiently remote. It is when the optimists are disappointed that the trouble begins. If you convince them that it was not the fault of the band, you leave them gasping in front of an incomprehensible problem, like a fish on the bank, that has not adjusted its mentality to the why and the wherefore of what has happened.

The visit of M. Ravel in 1923 furnishes a case in point. Some of my concert-going friends had heard Goossens's reading of the Choreographic Poem, *La Valse*—throbbing with vitality, and whirling you along with the full-blooded intoxication of it all. Then they heard the composer's neat, precise and prim interpretation of his own sensuous strains, and one had to produce the necessary arguments to prove that the contrast was not the fault of the band.

I find this vindication of orchestras no light task in the case of people whose mental attitude to "the band" approximates to that of the American Spring Poet who wrote:

> "The squirrel is a pretty bird;
> He has a bushy tail;
> He sometimes sits upon a limb,
> And sometimes on a rail;
> And gathers nuts very
> assiduously all through
> the bright summer
> time, so that when
> the cold blasts of
> winter come along, his
> stock won't
> fail"—

and when his poem was rejected for faulty scansion, exclaimed, in flabbergasted surprise: "Wal: if the last line *is* a trifle long, cain't ye see *it's the squirrel's fault*?"

"Well, but" (being English they did not say "Wal"), gasped our bewildered optimists, "if Goossens produced that intoxicating whirl, it must have been in the music. Ravel composed the music, and therefore must have meant it to get that effect. So why didn't it?" I could but reply that Mr. Goossens (so I was credibly informed by a brother musician) is a distinguished dancer who can waltz a whole evening without fatigue. So he gave us a dancer's reading (as M. Ravel intended).

"Well, then"—proceeded my persistent friends of the general public—"if M. Ravel intended that effect, it must have been the band's fault that he didn't get it."

To conceive an idea does not necessarily mean the power to carry it out. Mr. Augustus John could paint a gipsy leaping a ten-foot wall, but it is no disparagement to suggest his inability to perform the feat himself. It is just as unreasonable to expect a composer (*qua* composer) to give practical effect to his ideas on the orchestra.

Why, then, all this solicitude for having musical works conducted by the composer? Because it is one of the few compliments which musicians can pay a distinguished composer whom they wish to honour, and incidentally it attracts the public and ensures a full house—merely one of those little social amenities that make the wheels of life run the more smoothly. So, my dear good member of the general public, when such performances do not come up to the level of others you have heard, please remember that two different sets of brain-cells are used for composing and conducting. Nature does not give the use of both to the same person. So don't blame the composer, and—above all—don't blame the band.

XIII

EXETER HALL IN THE 'FIFTIES

THE late George R. Sims in his "Mustard and Cress" page in the *Referee* was fond of referring to the first periodical for which he wrote—the *Welcome Guest*. It used to come out weekly, and the first number appeared on Saturday, May 1st, 1858. Amongst some old books that belonged to my father I came across the two bound volumes for 1858–9, and for their period they are rather remarkable examples of popular literature. The magazine was started by young people who afterwards became figures in Fleet Street. George Augustus Sala (one of the "young lions" of the *Daily Telegraph*) was then about thirty-four, and was one of the chief contributors. Other members of the staff included Frederick Greenwood, Augustus Mayhew, John Lang, Edmund Yates (who became better known as editor of the *World*), and Adelaide Procter (best known as the versifier of Sullivan's *Lost Chord*). "Phiz," McConnell, and other well-known artists were responsible for the copious illustrations.

Of course its moral tone was unimpeachable. The Great Exhibition had been opened only seven years before; the Prince Consort was still alive; Exeter Hall was in full blast; and the middle classes were "serious"—a term that is unintelligible to this generation, but which meant something very portentous in those days. The German terms "papa" and "mamma" had become English by adoption; parents were always wise; and children were of two kinds only—the obedient and the disobedient. Naturally, the *Welcome Guest* is a faithful reflection of the modes and morals of its time. Listen to this gorgeous piece of prose:

The Baroness was seated in an arbour, glancing over the new magazines from the bookseller's in the adjacent town, . . . but her mind was but partially absorbed in the pages before her. . . . At last, giving audible expression to her thoughts, she said:

"Leonora, you are now becoming a great girl; nevertheless you are quite a child in your ways. We have allowed you to grow up under the guidance of your nurse and tutor, but it is time to think about you learning something in good earnest."

"I thought I was to leave off learning now," replied Leonora poutingly.

"Your pronunciation of French is still very bad, and your papa wishes you to attend to your drawing; you have some talent for it."

"I only draw caricatures," exclaimed Leonora; "they are the easiest. You have only to make a long nose or a short leg, and the person looks ridiculous."

"You must not draw caricatures," said her mother: "it spoils your taste and makes you satirical." Leonora hung down her head. "And pray who was the young man with whom you walked through the garden a short time since?" pursued her mother reprovingly. "You gave him your papa's strawberries."

"Do not be always scolding me, dear mamma!" exclaimed her daughter, blushing. "The stranger was a handsome and polite young man going to town; he has neither father nor mother—that made me pity him. And he was so modest, too! Do not be angry with me!" she continued coaxingly, as she flung herself on the neck of her mother, in whose eyes more of love than anger was apparent.

The Baroness kissed her lips, and said kindly, "You are my own good, wild girl. Now, go and look for your papa; his coffee is getting cold."

As the Baron, still full of his conversation with Ehrenthal, entered the arbour, the Baroness laid her hand in his, and said: "Oscar, I am anxious about Leonora."

"Is she ill?" asked the Baron, somewhat startled.

"No; she is quite well, and good to the very bottom of her heart, but bolder and wilder than befits her years."

"She has been brought up in the country, and has grown a hardy lass," replied her father reassuringly.

"But she is deficient in good breeding and delicacy towards strangers," continued the Baroness. "I am afraid she runs the risk of becoming an original."

There's high tone for you! Read it, ye anæmic writers of Georgian fiction. Read it and blush for your decadent morals.

Now for some musical notes:

A Singing Master informs us that the tenor is not, as we stated in No. 14 of the *Welcome Guest*, the highest male voice, but that the alto is higher. He adds that there are still a great number of men who sing alto—a fact that we cannot but deplore. We repeat that the highest natural voice *is* the tenor, and that the fact that there are men who are unfortunate enough to have the voices of boys has nothing to do with the question. In glee clubs and other shouting societies, from which women are excluded, the alto is naturally in much request; but the great modern composers recognise no such voice. Next in height to the tenor is the contralto. Where Mario ends Alboni begins. There was an Italian alto—a member of a class now happily extinct, we believe—who appeared some years since at Her Majesty's Theatre, and who rejoiced in the name—Veluti. Of him it was wittily said: "Non vir sed Veluti."

Very correct and proper, and not a bad pun either. But hear the great George Augustus Sala on an oratorio at Exeter Hall:

I declare I never saw a theatre in a country town—where, at least, two-thirds of the population consist of such as I have described, without wondering at the lunacy of the person that built it—without marvelling at the idiocy of every fresh speculator who enters on the management. We may pretend to despise the Puritan world, write books and farces against them, and quiz the *Record* or the *Wesleyan*; but it is folly to ignore the vast numerical strength of these same Puritans. They purchase such books as *Memorials of Captain Headly Vicars* by thousands; they subscribe thousands of pounds yearly in an almost insane hope of converting heathen barbarians to a better faith; they give away millions of tracts; they flood the platform and the auditory of every public meeting. It

won't do to ignore them. Cromwell's Ironsides and Sir Harry Vane's Fifth-Monarchy Men have made too deep a mark upon the people of England to be lightly passed over.

But the serious world, and that section who are worldly, meet on neutral ground at an Exeter Hall oratorio. The religionists see no sin in listening to sacred music; the mundane come to listen with delight to the immortal strains of Handel, of Haydn, and Mendelssohn. "When shall their glory fade?" asks Tennyson, singing of the Six Hundred at Balaclava. When shall the glory of our great oratorio writers decay? Never—I hope.

Wasn't it Lord John Manners who about that time wrote

> "Let learning, wealth, and arts, and commerce die,
> But leave us still our Oratorii."

If I have not quoted him correctly I feel sure some more enlightened reader will correct *me*. Anyway, if oratorio has become a little flyblown to-day, we still have *Elijah* left. It is performed, I believe, at the "Three Choirs" Festivals.

Mr. Sala the moralist is good. But listen to him when he becomes dithyrambic:

In truth, I think that to hear an oratorio chastens and purifies the mind, and that we go away from those grand performances wiser and better men. There is a natural disinclination to return—at least immediately—to frivolous and trivial pursuits, after listening to those solemn and ennobling strains. I know that some exist upon whom music has no effect whatsoever; but I believe that the vast majority are influenced for good or for evil by the sound of music. The most heartless woman in the world whom I know cries when she hears *Kathleen Mavourneen*. Napoleon could never listen to *Lascio ch'io pianga la cruda sorte* without crossing himself. How grandly does John Dryden set forth this theory in his immortal St. Cecilian Ode! With what exquisite art has he shown us Alexander moved to alternate joy, pride, shame, weeping, frenzy, as old Timotheus sweeps the lyre in varied strains!

Don't laugh, good readers of Strangways and Legge, of Newman and Evans. Sala's critiques are not like theirs, but, believe me, they were quite as rational as those of his contemporaries—Chorley in the *Athenæum* and Davison in *The Times*.

And even over our modern music critics Sala had the advantage. He had McConnell to illustrate him. Why can't we do that sort of thing to-day? Just think how it would make for edification if George or "Eddie" Morrow could be induced to draw a Queen's Hall audience listening to Stravinsky's *Dirge* for wind instruments, with an appropriate appreciation of the composer by Mr. Ernest Newman. But alack! those days are gone. The "young lions" of to-day's *Telegraph* have never even heard of "Telegraphese"; the leader-writers of the Press no longer speak of "persiflage" or "badinage." They have forgotten all about "quizzing" and "twitting." I doubt if there is a journalist alive to-day with sufficient originality to call an oyster a succulent bivalve or to speak of grouse as the feathered denizens of the moors.

No, when I want journalism with plenty of red corpuscles in it I have to get back to Sala and his companions. I have given you a taste of their quality in the matter of oratorio. We will follow them to the opera in the next chapter.

XIV

QUEEN VICTORIA AT THE OPERA

THE difference between "Society" journalism of to-day and that of the 'fifties is that your paragraphist of to-day must write as from the inside, and his predecessor of the 'fifties frankly wrote—as a "denizen" of Grub Street—about a social plane to which he could never aspire. Whether or not your Society journalist of to-day mixes on familiar terms with the peerage, he must, at any rate, write as though he did. Your journalist of the 'fifties wrote as an inferior about his "betters"; he called members of Society "the Swells" as late as the days of H. J. Byron, and in this appellation there was nothing of irony or ridicule; he used it as a term of profound respect. He never forgot that "Society" was paradise, and he the peri who might never enter therein. He might write harrowing stories of virtuous villagers and wicked squires; he might speak scathingly about bold bad baronets; but he never forgot that squires and baronets were Pillars of Society, and that between squire and villager, baronet and commoner, there was a great gulf fixed.

No, your George Augustus Salas reserved all their ridicule and scorn for the class to which they themselves belonged.

Grub Street could rail at a decadent duke as splendidly as a Clyde member. But Grub Street got angry because his duke was decadent; the Clyde gets angry because his duke is a duke. Sala could work up a fine moral indignation about "the Fops" and "the Swells," but the sayings and doings of both interested him enormously. Listen to him on the subject of "Fops' Alley" (the name for the colonnade round the old Her Majesty's Theatre):

Fops' Alley! The word reminds me of bygone operatic days, and I sigh when, looking round the house, I remember how Time, the destroyer, has left a mark, too, upon these *cari luoghi*. It is true that many of those reminiscences may not be worth sighing for; but is there not always something melancholy in the fading away of old associations? Where is the Omnibus Box? The longitudinal

den answering to the *Loge Infernale* at Paris, and the *Fosse aux Lions* at Madrid, yet has its customary locality over the orchestra, on the Queen's side of the proscenium; but where are its brilliant, witty, worthless occupants? But one, the gay young prince, who, if report says true, kicked, with his own royal foot, through the panels of the door of communication leading from the Omnibus Box to the stage, and for that night—the night of the famous Tamburini and Coletti disturbance—locked by special order of M. Laporte, has become a Respectable, holds high office, does his work well, and occupies himself far more with the subject of soldiers' kits and barrack accommodation than with squabbles between Tweedledum and Tweedledee. But where are the rest? Where the dashing spirits and impetuous madcaps of twenty years since? One is in a lunatic asylum, and another paralytic, and a third is prowling about the gambling-places on the Rhine, and the last I saw of a fourth was once in 1852, descending the stairs of the Hôtel des Bains, at Dieppe, when a companion, drawing me on one side as a broken, bowed, decrepit, sunken-eyed, gray-headed, prematurely aged man passed us tottering on a stick, whispered to me: "See, there goes D'Orsay." Who died a fortnight afterwards.

The very name of Fops' Alley is becoming obsolete now. The next generation will forget its locality. In those days, on drawing-room nights, the men used to come in their court suits and uniforms, their stars and badges, the ladies in their ostrich plumes and diamond necklaces, only taking off their trains. There were opera-hats in those days—half-moon-cocked hats; now the men carry Gibuses like pancakes. The link boys are disappearing—the leather-lunged, silver-badged fellows, who shouted so sonorously that Lady Sardanapalias' carriage stopped the way. And the glories of the operatic stage; are not those inconstant singing birds fled now? Can all the Arditis in the world compensate for Costa, with his coat thrown back, and those immortal, tight-fitting white kid gloves? He was the first man who ever succeeded in parting his hair down the back; and now, he too is growing bald, and he has cajoled Grisi, the mellifluous, and Mario, the heroic, to pipe their nightingale notes among

the coach-builders of Long Acre, and the fried-fish shopmen of Drury Lane. Of the glorious, unequalled, unapproachable Four—Grisi, Rubini, Tamburini, and Labiache—who once electrified the world in the *Puritani*, three are dead: the last is in Covent Garden provoking malevolent criticism. Where are the other Four, the Terpsichorean quartett, the immortals who danced the *pas de quatre*? Ah! Mademoiselle Piccolomini, you are very arch and pretty; ah! Mademoiselle Marie Taglioni, you are a *spirituelle* and graceful dancer; but you are not the giants and giantesses of the old Dead Days.

In those days the Court and Society attended opera at "Her Majesty's Theatre" in the Haymarket. Only *hoi polloi* frequented Covent Garden. The Haymarket had a lofty scorn for what Sala called "a quarter not a hundred miles from Bow Street." Comparing continental opera-houses (to their detriment) with the luxurious "Her Majesty's Theatre," he drags in a contemptuous reference to "our Royal Italian Opera-house in Bow Street, Covent Garden, London, which is simply a big theatre, ill-built, and undecorated."

There you are, Mr. Higgins! That is the fig Mr. Sala gave for your fine big opera-house.

But I digress. (You will observe how easily I slip into the style of my hero.) I forget that I am taking you to "Her Majesty's" for a Royal performance. Let Sala tell the tale, for I could never scale his lyrical heights.

Look around you, *terræo filius*, in the vast arena of Her Majesty's. Wonder and admire, for such a sight it is not permitted for you often to behold. Look around, and around again, the enormous horseshoe; look from base to summit, at this magnificent theatre, glorious with light, with beauties, and with riches. Here are gathered the mighty, and noble, and wealthy, the venerable and wise, the young and beauteous of the realm. The prime minister seeks at the opera a few hours' relaxation from the toils of office; the newly-married peeress there displays the dazzling diamonds custom now, for the first time, permits

her to wear; the blushing maiden of seventeen, "just out" —that very day, perhaps, presented at Court—smiles and simpers in a shrine of gauze and artificial flowers. Mark, yonder, that roomy box on the grand tier, which a quiet, plainly-dressed party has just entered. There is a matronly lady in black, with a few bugle ornaments in her *coiffure*. She ensconces herself in a corner, her back towards the audience, screens herself with a curtain, and then calmly proceeds to take a review of the front rows of the stalls, and the occupants of the proscenium boxes. It is not considered etiquette to take more than a cursory glimpse of the matronly lady in black, through *your* opera-glass. Presently there sits down by the matronly lady's side a handsome, portly, middle-aged gentleman, in plain sober evening dress, and with a very high forehead—so high indeed, that I don't think that the assumption that the middle-aged gentleman's head inclined to baldness would be unreasonable. In the opposite angle of the box sits a demure young lady—sometimes a couple of demure ones—who doesn't move much or speak much; and at the back of the *loge* are two gentleman in white waistcoats, who never sit down, and, from the exquisitely uncomfortable expression of their countenances, would appear to be standing on one leg. Now, take the hat of your heart off, for your head, according to operatic sumptuary laws, must be already uncovered, and with your spirit salaam thrice three times, for the matronly lady is Victoria Queen of England, and the middle-aged gentleman, inclined to corpulence and baldness, is his Royal Highness the Prince Consort. The demure ones are maids-of-honour or ladies-in-waiting, and as for the white-waistcoated uncomfortables (seemingly) on one leg, one may be the tremendous Gold Stick himself, and the other—who shall say?—the ineffable Phipps, pride of chivalry and pearl of privy purses.

So much for Sala the word-painter. Now for Sala the musical critic:

There is lately come to town, at least within these latter years, an Italian gentleman by the name of Verdi, to whose brassy screeds, and tinkling cymbalics, it is expected that all *habitués* of the opera must listen, to the

utter exclusion and oblivion of the old musical worthies who delighted the world with their immortal works before Signor Verdi was born. I have brought you to Her Majesty's Theatre, and this is unfortunately a Verdi night. You may listen to him, but I won't. Thersites Theorbo, the editor of the *Spinet* (with which is incorporated that famous musical journal the *Jew's Harp*), may accuse me of being "perfunctory," or of being an ass—no one minds Thersites Theorbo, knowing him to be a good fellow, much bemused in Cavendish tobacco and counterpoint; but I will shut my eyes, and muse upon the bygone glories of the opera. The place is a mass of memories. Things and books, and scenes and men, and stories, come teeming on my brain as I sit in my stall, heedless of Signor Verdi and his musical machinations.

And the moral of all this is that history will keep on repeating itself. Just as the "safe" critic of to-day shakes his head over Stravinsky, and refers you back to Wagner, "who delighted the world with his immortal works before Signor Stravinsky was born," so you had the wise Sala, who shook his head over Verdi, and referred you back to "the old worthies who delighted," etc. And just as our young bloods of to-day hail the iconoclast Satie, and speak of "poor old Verdi," so did the young bloods of the 'fifties hail Verdi as the daring revolutionary, and speak of "poor old Donizetti." Our up-to-date musical criticism of to-day doesn't seem so very original after all.

But I digress again, gentle reader. (You observe how Sala's style is getting a stranglehold upon me.) I ought to tell you of some of the "mass of memories that came teeming into his brain." He recalls the old favourites one by one:

And then I bow down in awe before the radiant shadow of Farinelli, great and good, unmoved by fortune, unspoilt by fame—Farinelli, whose dulcet notes cured a Spanish king of madness.

And then:

I bow before a greater shadow, though of one who wrote and sang not, save to his pretty wife.

Here Sala places a big asterisk after "pretty wife," and following it to the footnote we read:

Who married again, and extinguished herself. So did Maria Louisa, so did Mrs. Shelley. They *will* marry again, these unconscionable feminines.

Then Sala wakes up, comes down from the clouds, and gives us "the human touch," which was apparently as popular in Fleet Street then as now:

Upon my word and honour there is Van Poggi, the chorus singer, on the stage. I am recalled at once from the dreamland to actualities. There is an old operatic saying that Her Majesty's Theatre, in the Haymarket, could not be complete without Van Poggi, and now behold that lyrical Widdicomb. According to the same tradition —not always trustworthy—Van Poggi was the identical chorus singer who assisted Velluti to alight from his barge the night the last of those male soprani made his first appearance (in the opera of the *Crociato in Egitto*) before an audience who had almost forgotten the fame of the Pacchierottis, the Rubinellis, and the Marchesis. Van Poggi wears wonderfully well. Nobody knows his exact nationality; whether he is a Dutchman, a Dane, or an Italian. His residence has never been precisely ascertained. The management have no occasion to rout him up, for he is always punctual at rehearsal. During the vacation he retires to Paris, where he tells his friends that he is to be found between ten and four every day in the Long Gallery of the Louvre. During the London season you may contemplate Van Poggi between the same hours in Mr. Zerubbabel's cigar-shop in the Quadrant, at whose door he generally stands in a Spanish cloak faced with velvet. He never sang any better or any worse than he sings now; he was never promoted to play the smallest separate part, such as is from time to time assigned

to the gentleman who appears in the bills as Signor N. N., or *non nominato*. It is believed that Van Poggi would faint if he had to deliver a line of recitative. Yet there is a very general opinion in operatic circles that Her Majesty's Theatre would come to grief if Van Poggi were not among the chorus. At the commencement of the season there are always anxious enquiries at the box-office as to whether Van Poggi is secured; and a reply being given in the affirmative, the lovers of the lyrical drama breathe freely, and the subscription progresses. No one knows what became of Van Poggi in the dark and dismal interregnum during which Mr. Lumley was compelled to close his doors. Mysterious offers of better parts, and better salaries, had, it is reported, been made to Van Poggi, emanating from a quarter not a hundred miles from Bow Street, Covent Garden; but the patriotic chorister scornfully refused them. He was still seen to haunt Mr. Zerubbabel's cigar-shop at the commencement of the musical season; then he suddenly disappeared; and whether he went abroad, or wrapped himself in the Spanish cloak and so lay torpid for two years like a dormouse, must for ever remain a matter for speculation. But it is certain that when the Haymarket Phœnix arose from its ashes, and the light once more shone on its amber satin curtains, there was Van Poggi, at the first chorus rehearsal, as fresh as paint, and looking better than ever. And it is moreover reported, that when his Excellency, whom a combination of political difficulties (which began about the time some English grenadiers were sent out to Gallipoli) had forced to leave this country, and who did not return for upwards of three years, when his Excellency Baron . . . made his first visit to his beloved opera-house, the piece of the evening being *Lucia di Lammermoor*, he swept the ranks of those preposterous sham Highlanders, who are discovered singing a sham hunting chorus, anxiously with his lorgnette, and at last cried out with a satisfied accent: "*Bon, voilà Van Poggi.*" He had recognised that chorus singer in his kilt, and was thenceforth persuaded that the opera season was safe.

I ought to say that Sala—like all good Victorians—realised the value of contrast in pointing a moral, for they

all—from Ruskin downwards—had a moral to point in those days. If he spoke of wealth, and rank, and fashion, he never failed to show you the reverse of the medal. "Look on this picture, and on that," was a journalistic maxim hallowed by long usage. From the opera with its glitter and its luxury he takes you straight to the sordid squalor of a pawnbroker's shop and leaves you to moralise on the contrast. But let him tell the tale himself:

There is a new ballet to-night, in which the enchanting little Pocchini, most modest and most graceful of modern *danseuses*, is to appear; but Signor Verdi's opera is very long, and I am aweary of his figments and cannot sit them out. Besides, I want your presence, trusty friend, and companion, always in the interest of "Twice Round the Clock." We have a little business to transact, and as it is getting towards nine o'clock we had better transact it at once. Leave we then the dazzling temple, let us hie to an obscure retreat, to your servant known, where we can leave our opera-glasses, divest ourselves of our white cravats, and throw paletots over our evening dress. There, a few touches, and the similitude of swells is taken away from us. Now let us plunge into a labyrinth of narrow streets to attain our unfashionable goal, for, upon my word, our destination is a pawnbroker's shop.

He is tenderly humorous (and less artificial) over "smiles and tears" at the pawnbroker's (Dickens himself might have been the writer); but as he is due at nine o'clock at "the Royal Victoria Theatre" (not yet christened "the Old Vic"), he takes leave of us.

It is time now for us to redeem that trifling little matter which we pawned last Tuesday, on purpose to have an excuse for visiting the pawnbroker's shop to-night, and casting glances in which curiosity is not unmixed with compassion, go back to Signor Verdi and Her Majesty's Theatre. Thou at least, my friend, may do this—I will leave thee in the vestibule for awhile; for, between the

hours of nine and ten, I have other clock matters to which I must attend.

And I, too—dear George Augustus—"have other matters to which I must attend," and so take leave of *you* whom I have grown to love. I have not met a friend who found his way to my heart as you have done, nor have I parted from one with greater regret. God bless you, George! You are wonderful.

XV

PARSIFOOLISHNESS

[Notes on a Beecham Performance]

We are a marvellous nation. When *Parsifal* performances were restricted to Bayreuth, we made pilgrimages there; listened in awe and wonderment; angled obsequiously for invitations to Villa Wahnfried that we might kiss the hand of Frau Cosima and contemplate the tomb in the back garden; talked Schopenhauer in the pine woods; delivered ourselves gladly to the boarding-house keeper as sheep to the shearer; consumed much food and lager—discoursing the while with fellow-pilgrims on the virtues of self-denial and renunciation; and returned home to bore our friends with a plenitude of mysticism and music. Never was such a message; such an interpretation; such perfection of operatic art. And this foolish cackle went on even after Siegfried Wagner had taken control, and the Bayreuth performances became dull and uninspired, and often thoroughly bad. The orchestra rarely rose above mediocrity, and its conductor kept well below that level. But we had been told beforehand that Bayreuth was wonderful, and we came back and said it was so.

And yet (most foolish foolishness of all), when the Beecham Opera Company gave us *Parsifal* with an orchestra a hundred times better than Bayreuth, under a conductor worth a hundred Siegfried Wagners, we "praised it with faint damns" because here and there were trivial signs of hasty preparation.

We said Mr. A—— "did not look the part." If to "look the part" his make-up should have been that of the traditional erotic German tenor, with a profusion of flaxen curls, one can only say, "Thank heaven it was not." Comparing Mr. A.'s Parsifal with the Teutonic tenors one has seen, it may be said that whatever views we might hold about his untraditional readings, there could be no doubt about his intellectual grip of the part. Until this performance I had not seen a Parsifal who could stand

through the monastery scene without at least shifting a leg at some time or other. Mr. A.'s silent, motionless figure focussed our attention in much the same way that Chaliapin focussed it in *Ivan*. No higher tribute could be paid.

We said little about Kundry, yet I think Miss B. was the best Kundry I have seen. She looked the part as well as she sang it. I know no present-day singer who could have done Gurnemanz better than Mr. C. He was impressive without being ponderous and funereal. Mr. D.'s Amfortas was a fine study. Mr. E. did not overdo Klingsor, and consequently made the risky castle scene convincing.

We criticised, too, the painter for his magic garden—we, who had sat in a trance of ecstatic hypnosis before the horrors of crude, raw colouring that did duty for that scene at Bayreuth. We raised indignant cries of "s-s-s-sh" when a few enthusiasts attempted applause at the fall of the curtain. We gave them sternly to understand that they were not listening to an opera, but were participants in a solemn religious rite, and that although it was sacrilegious to applaud the *music*, it would be quite in order to call the performers before the curtain and applaud *them*.

What humbug the whole business is! This pose of solemnity and religiosity was all very well at Bayreuth, where it was a valuable commercial asset to the Wagner family, but really it is time the unintelligent pretence were dropped in London. The music of *Parsifal* is great music; the opera of *Parsifal* is no more a religious affair than *Aïda*. Both have temple scenes, and both give examples of "renunciation." And were I asked which of the two renunciations was the nobler, I should give the palm to the lady who elects to be walled up alive, rather than to the gentleman whose "renunciation" consists in becoming the head of a flourishing community of knights.

So far as the music is concerned it may be "an old man's music," but it was an old man whose brain was unclouded

and whose hand had lost none of its cunning. So far as the "message" of *Parsifal* is concerned, it is unhealthy and insincere. It is the expression of a tired man's mood—"the mood which follows the mood of Tristan as certainly as the night follows the day." As music, *Parsifal* is a thing of beauty; the musician rose superior to his "message." As religion it is revolting to every really religious mind. Its sham mysticism and incense-laden atmosphere may attract the decadent, but they repel the musician. Only when we have learnt to look upon the "religious" rites of *Parsifal* in the same spirit of detachment with which we view the religious rites of *Aïda* can we achieve a full satisfaction in the music and abandon ourselves to its ravishing beauty.

The first act, both in its music and its exposition of the story, is one of the finest things in the history of opera. Even the Fee-fo-fum of Klingsor holds us by the force and power of the music. Nothing more bewitching than the flower-maidens' chorus has been written. Kundry's tale of the sorrows of Parsifal's mother is poignantly lovely; so is much of the scene by the well. But not even the touch of the master-musician can redeem the Grail scenes from insincerity. Not that the music is other than beautiful, but I am beginning to feel that the beauties of this part of the drama can be best appreciated in the study, with the score on one's lap.

The experiment I am discussing, of "Opera in English" as opposed to "English Opera," was a great achievement. It showed that in opera we can (if we wish) stand on our own feet; that our conductors need no longer be recruited from other nations; that our singers, if they have not yet the operatic experience of foreign ones, are at least their equals in intelligence; and lastly, that no foreign opera-house can boast a better orchestra.

Until we really get "English Opera," and even when we do get it, it is well that the tradition of "Opera in English" should be established. It is greatly to be desired for two

excellent reasons: (1) it will hold back the invasion of foreign artists who scorn to learn English, but who condescend to come over here and reap higher fees than are obtainable in their own country; and (2) it gives a chance to native artists to show that we can produce singers and actors of our own.

Do not let me be misunderstood. I do not imply that foreign artists should not be encouraged to come to this country if they are as good as, or better than, our own. We want the best performances, no matter whether the performers are foreign or not. But traditional summer seasons of Grand Opera at Covent Garden are a regrettable reminder of the old hard-dying superstition that in opera we must mainly rely on foreign artists, no matter whether they are first- or second-rate. What we do want badly in England is progress in opera, and by progress I mean giving the public the opportunity of hearing performances of all styles and all schools of opera. The mere multiplication of performances of certain operas (until they become threadbare) is not progress.

Apart from the fact that Sir Thomas Beecham lifted opera in this country out of the old ruts, he incidentally demonstrated that English singers are "quicker studies" than any others, and are capable of producing as great a variety of operas as one could wish. *Parsifal*, for example, was prepared in so short a time as to establish a record in quick production. And here again we found ourselves knocking our heads against another operatic superstition. So accustomed are we to laborious rehearsals with stupid singers, that when we had an intelligent body like the Beecham Company giving us a stupendous work like *Parsifal* with less trouble than we expected, the word went round that they had not had enough rehearsal, and a certain amount of "crabbing" of the first performance ensued.

In Mr. Ernest Newman's book *A Musical Motley* there is an amusing chapter on auto-suggestion in music, and

auto-suggestion was much in evidence in the case of Beecham's *Parsifal.* Just as we belauded Siegfried Wagner's indifferent performances because we had been told they were good, so we belittled a remarkably good performance of *Parsifal* because we had been told to expect an indifferent one. One sometimes wonders how many folk really listen to music with their own ears, or judge it by the light of their own understanding.

XVI

OPERA AND THE STAR SYSTEM

If the late Mr. Gladstone or the present Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson had ever elected to give public recitals of the multiplication table, they could not have failed to draw large audiences. A glorious voice has still a thrill for the listener, entirely independent of the subject-matter of the performer's discourse, whether it be musical or oratorical. With all the marvellous developments of instrumental resources ; with all the magical effects which the modern orchestra can produce, the primitive instinct by which we thrill responsively to the sound of the human voice still remains the most powerful. The orchestra, it is true, does play upon the emotions, but it has its intellectual aspect as well. For that reason it makes its appeal mainly to the cultured. But for the multitude the human voice is—and will always remain—the instrument which stirs the emotions most strongly. It is this ever-abiding instinct which makes popular idols of public singers. A glorious voice is one of the greatest of human gifts. Its human appeal is great, just because it *is* human and alive. For that reason, its power with the multitude surpasses that of the most skilled performance vicariously effected on an inanimate instrument, no matter how beautiful the tone and *timbre* of that instrument may be.

It is an accepted commonplace that without emotion there can be no true art ; but there must be intellect as well. Emotion without intellect is not art, but mere sentimentalism. Divorced from intellect, it may agitate the surface, but it can never stir the deeps. The average person, however, is content to have his mere surface emotions stirred, and, in accordance with the simple laws of supply and demand, the exercise of intellect on the part of the singer is seldom called for. This is a merciful dispensation of a bountiful Providence, since public singers as a class have not been distinguished by any overwhelming preponderance of intellect. I could name many exceptions to this rule, and so could every reader, but I am

on this occasion dealing with the rule and not the exceptions.

If public singers confined their activities to playing upon the emotions of their listeners by the emission of beautiful sounds, or to tickling the ears of the public with trills and shakes and top-notes and cadenzas, no one could take exception to them. There are now many such performers on the music-halls, and their skill always rouses my admiration. But unfortunately, the singer is given to incursions into the realm of music, and claims (too often, alas!) to be regarded as a musician. Let us examine these claims.

What would be thought of a Cabinet Minister (and operatic stars do enjoy wider fame than Cabinet Ministers) who not only was unable to deliver a speech without private coaching, but who had not sufficient education to read the manuscript of a speech when placed before him? What would be thought of an actor who was unable to read words of more than one syllable, and had to be taught his lines orally by someone who *could* read the hard words? or worse still—who had to be taught every gesture and every bit of phrasing and punctuation? These suppositions are absurd, no doubt, but the analogy is not an unfair one if applied to operatic stars. They have a voice, it is true, and the voice is often a marvellous one. But it is (in the vast majority of instances) *vox et præterea nihil.* Ask any operatic conductor or chorus-master how many of the stars he has encountered can read the simplest musical phrase without assistance; how many can sing the simplest musical interval correctly; how many have the most rudimentary knowledge of time or even note-values, and the answers would give rash inquirers the shock of their lives. Ask any poor composer who has been lucky enough to get an opera produced, what he thinks of the musical ability (I am not speaking of vocal ability) of the stars who condescend to lead him before the curtain only after they have exhausted themselves in taking all the calls. These matters are perfectly well understood by those

behind the scenes, but the opera-going public seems to know nothing of them. It is really time they were better informed. The composer of an opera is a musician; the conductor of an opera must be a musician; the chorus-master must know his business; the humblest member of the orchestra must be able to read at first sight the music put before him, and to play it intelligently. It is only the singers who have no musical knowledge, and have to be laboriously taught their parts like parrots. And—be it noted—this incapacity is not confined to the chorus; it is just as rampant amongst the stars. Indeed, there are few operatic productions where some real musicians will not be found in the ranks of the chorus, which is more than can usually be said of the principals in the cast.

It is time then, I say, that the general public should realise the musical incompetence of the stars upon whom they lavish their plaudits. The stars often possess temperament, more rarely brains, and most rarely of all a knowledge of the barest rudiments of music. Their *rôles* are taught them privately by a coach, not only as regards phrasing and interpretation, but as regards such simple matters as intervals, time and note values, just as one would teach them to a parrot. The coach (who must be a musician) remains in obscurity and earns a pittance. The star (usually no musician) is a public idol and draws a princely salary. The members of the orchestra are musicians. In pre-war days they were lucky if their salaries ran into double figures *per week*. The stars were seldom musicians, and their salaries ran into double or treble figures *per night*. The orchestral player is prepared to play as many operas as the conductor chooses to put before him; the star is only prepared to sing the limited number that his (or her) coach has laboriously drummed into him (or her) after heart-breaking toil and effort. The production of an opera demands a high standard of musical competence on the part of conductor and orchestra *and prompter*; too frequently their combined salaries do not

equal the amount demanded by the "star" of the evening (beautiful or otherwise).

All this is quite wrong. There can be no satisfactory progress in opera until we treat the star as a certain statesman would fain have treated the Turk. It is absurd that the least intelligent and the least musical members of an operatic company should receive such a disproportionate amount of the proceeds. An opera is an artistic whole. No part of a production should be sacrificed in order that inflated salaries may be paid to the spoilt favourites of an unthinking public.

But there is an even stronger reason why we should abolish the star. Time and again there have been operatic managers who would willingly have produced a large and representative selection of operas. But they were tied by the star system. The public (so they argued) demanded stars, with the result that instead of being able to produce what operas they wished, they were limited to the meagre number that their stars had learned (by the patient drudgery of the coach) to sing.

This must all be altered sooner or later. Sir Thomas Beecham did once show us the way. What was it that made a "Beecham Opera" so exhilarating? Simply that he paid no regard to popular favourites, and chose singers who possessed brains as well as temperament. They might be unknown at first, but their musical ability soon built them up a reputation by means of which they might become stars, but stars of a different magnitude from those under discussion. A Beecham production was a coherent operatic whole, not a display of vocal gymnastics by a few individuals with a band, a chorus and scenery to keep up the illusion that we were listening to an opera.

These remarks are, of course, in the nature of destructive criticism, all very well in its way as a preliminary, but not particularly helpful in matters of reform or progress. But destructive criticism in this case is really necessary at first. If abuses are to be removed, they must first be

pointed out and made clear to a public which, generally speaking, does not seem aware of their existence. Such is the glamour that surrounds the operatic star that in the popular mind opera without him (or her) is unthinkable. To the average person attendance at an opera means going to hear this or that singer. The idea that all opera work (to be successful) should be team work has yet to be grasped by the general public.

It all resolves itself into a question of fitness or unfitness. An acrobat or a juggler is eminently fitted to give acrobatic or juggling turns at a music-hall, where we can admire his skill. But we do not give him star parts in a drama, or (worse still) write dramas round him. It is not his fault that he cannot act, or that he has no turn for drama or dramatic literature. We do not expect such things of him, and we hold it no discredit that his talents are better employed on the halls than in the theatre.

The same holds good of operatic stars. As a general rule they are vocal acrobats and nothing more. For that reason they are eminently fitted to give vocal turns at a music-hall or on the concert-platform, where we can admire their skill. But why give them star parts in a music-drama, or (worse still) write music-dramas round them? They seldom display a talent for either music or drama, and are therefore as much out of place in opera as the late Cinquevalli would have been in Shakespearean drama at the Old Vic.

When will an unthinking public realise that vocal dexterity and interpretative art are two widely different things? The singer usually has a heaven-given vocal organ with which he (or she) was born, and for which he (or she) is not responsible. He (or she) may (and usually does) exercise that voice to its utmost limit of beauty and flexibility. But when all that is done it remains merely an instrument, glorious-sounding it is true, but still an instrument. The finest instrument is nothing in itself. It is only as a medium for the interpretation of music that

it becomes ennobled. And so with the human voice. If its owner cannot *interpret* music by means of it, he (or she) has clearly no place in the world of art. Sooner or later the public will awaken to the fact that operatic stars who can only sing and cannot interpret are an anomaly—that their presence on the operatic stage is not in the interests of true art, and that they must disappear.

How is this disappearance to be effected ? Quite simply. Let operatic managers and management announce their own programmes, and (as Sir Thomas Beecham did) engage and train only such principals as are able to perform adequately the *rôles* in the operas selected. At present nearly every operatic enterprise is handicapped by the limited repertoire of the star singer. Once the operatic star realised that the choice of operas to be produced no longer rested with him (or her), his (or her) commercial instincts would soon constrain him (or her) to qualify for the position of a star by compliance with managerial wishes.

I believe I am right in saying that the highest fees paid to stars are those at Covent Garden and the Metropolitan Opera-house in New York. Rumour has it that there must one day come an arrangement or understanding between these two houses in the matter of engaging principals. If this is so, it ought not to be difficult for these two houses in combination to give the public a constant supply of operas of every school and of every country. They would pay the piper, and would have every right to call the tune. It is the ambition of every European opera singer to appear eventually at one or other of these two houses. Once they realised that this was impossible unless they were prepared to play any opera that might be required, they would soon fall into line. The immediate result of such a policy would mean the elimination of a number of "great vocalists," and there would, of course, be a pretty outcry on their behalf from interested persons and parties ; but that would soon die down, and another

generation would see a class of operatic "Stars" who deserved the title because of their musical competence and their ability to *interpret* as well as sing. We should not lose a single great artist in this way. Great artists in opera are "great" because they possess brains as well as voices. They would retain their position whatever happened. Surely it would be a blessing and not a calamity that the brainless ones should be thus peacefully eliminated from opera (where their brainlessness and capriciousness would no longer drive managers and conductors to despair), and relegated to the music-halls and concert-platforms, where they could sing Tosti's *Good-bye for ever* without harm to anyone.

XVII

"ELEKTRA" REVIVED

We are very much given to saying that after the age of forty we get no thrills and few surprises.

We are even fonder of this axiom when applied to music. We say we have been through all the usual stages—instruction in the classics (and by this we usually mean German music of the eighteenth century); initiation into the tribe of the romantics (meaning, of course, the German school of the early and middle nineteenth century); enthusiasm for the moderns (by which we mean the German school of Wagnerian opera and Brahmsian everything else); and if we are not much over fifty we have been out on the barricades with the revolutionaries, and then settled down to praise of the past and malediction of everything after Debussy.

If, *en route*, we have learned anything outside German music, we are cultured indeed, and we do not let our friends forget it. But musically our Spiritual Home has been Germany. We tolerated the Frenchman Debussy because in our revolutionary days he was bracketed with the German Strauss, with whom he shared the abuse of the academics and the "safe" critics of those times.

Yes, after accepting Debussy we considered we had gone quite far enough. We had passed the stage of enthusiasms (with their attendant illusions) and settled down to plain reason and logic and sturdy British common-sense. And a nice, pleasant and comfortable position it is to be in. No problems to worry us. The "problems" ceased with Debussy and the other composers of our youth. We applied our intellects to those problems, and with all the ardour of youth we tackled them bravely, and settled every one to our satisfaction.

If we do not tackle the composer of to-day it is because—having gone through all the preliminary stages—we have arrived at the age of wisdom. In our wisdom we consider post-Debussy composers as eccentrics or freaks;

and why should wise people trouble their heads about freaks ?

The youngsters of to-day may taunt us with a hardening of our arteries, and impudently tell us that the same terms of opprobrium which we apply to Stravinsky and Satie were used by our forebears (when they were our age) towards "Strauss-and-Debussy." We know better than that. Strauss and Debussy were problems to be solved, and in our youthful wisdom we solved them : Stravinsky and Satie are freaks, and in our mature wisdom we ignore them. What could be more reasonable and logical than that ?

But alas ! art is one of those strange creatures that laugh at reason and logic, and music is the one that laughs the loudest.

No sooner have we tracked her down, and found her speaking in an idiom that is comprehensible, than—hey presto ! she takes wings again and flies to new fields, where few of us can follow her.

We have no sooner learnt the language of "Strauss-and-Debussy" and admitted them as tame inhabitants of our garden of beauty, than their rebellious progeny refuse to stay in our little agapemone, and take their flight to new gardens—the gardens of youth.

The revival of *Elektra* at Covent Garden last year gave some of us much to think about. Speaking personally, it seemed to me that Bruno Walter gave it broader outlines and greater sonority than did Nikisch when I heard it before the war. But it may be only lapse of time which made me look back on Nikisch's reading as hectic—absorbing and masterly though it was.

Or it may be that one had heard so much hectic music in the interval that *Elektra* now seems straightforwardness itself. We called it turgid once ; now it seems sheer clarity.

When it first came over to England we called the music "brutal" and were very severe on its "crude realism"—

the bleating of the sacrificial sheep, the whip-cracking, and so on. We conceded its grimness and force and said little, if anything, about beauty. But under Walter's baton it seemed to me that I had only too rarely experienced such all-compelling beauty as in the scene where Elektra welcomes Orestes.

We have got so accustomed to Strauss, and have so effectively reduced his formulas to rule, and have so definitely placed him down amongst the ultra-clever writers who are lacking in themes, that this rehearing of *Elektra* (which one thought one knew so well) amounted almost to a revolutionising of one's comfortable theories about him. We complained in the old days that he whirled us along for a solid hour and a half with feverish intensity. At the Walter revival I experienced no fever, but could not help wondering how many composers could maintain such concentrated intensity for the same period of time. The whole performance came as a rude negation of the theory that thrills are not possible after forty.

Possibly some portion of one's thrill was due to the exceptional cast that rendered the music. One seldom has such all-round efficiency in acting as well as singing, or such superb orchestral effects as Walter achieved.

When one does get a performance like this, it induces the painful reflection that we are perhaps more insular in music than we imagine ourselves to be.

Since the war there has been a tendency to cut ourselves off from the world of music wider than the portion we inhabit. We had too much of the foreigner in the old days, but that was only because the bulk of foreign musicians who visited us were second-raters or worse. We cannot have too many foreigners if they are first-rate. The more we keep in touch, especially in operatic affairs, with other countries which have an operatic tradition, the wider will be our operatic horizon, the surer our operatic sense. We shall judge our own composers more fairly, and will be less inclined to apply extravagant terms of praise to native

works, the only claims of which as opera are that they are performed in a theatre with scenery and costumes.

One left the theatre after *Elektra* feeling that, in spite of all that happened in the interval since its first performance, it wears well. One was also haunted by the uneasy consciousness that the British composer has not yet arrived who shall give us a work so dramatically conceived or of such sustained dramatic interest. This reflection may not be pleasant, but it is at least a salutary one.

XVIII

THE SECRET OF GILBERT AND SULLIVAN

March 25th, 1925, saw the enthusiastic jubilee celebrations of the Gilbert and Sullivan partnership which has exercised an influence over British and foreign audiences little short of phenomenal. For it was on March 25th that *Trial by Jury*, the first of the operas, was produced at the Royalty Theatre, Dean Street, Soho.

I say "audiences" and not "the stage" or "British music," because the Gilbert and Sullivan type of opera has had no successors.

It has had many imitators, but their consistent record of failure leaves "Gilbert and Sullivan" in the unique position of a thing apart, a copy of nobody, a founder of no school, a conception which died with its creators. This is not to say that the operas are dead. On the contrary, they are very much alive and enjoy a greater vogue than ever.

They are unique, inasmuch as one invariably couples the composer's name with that of the librettist—a thing we never do in the case of any other opera whatever. During the lifetime of the collaborators this was inevitable, as never before had we had a librettist who kept us perpetually on the *qui vive* with his satires on topical matters. The Englishman above all things enjoys a joke at his own expense. He may be affected by this or that craze for a time, but once present him with its humorous side and he is the first to join in the general laughter.

In Celtic countries it is possible to kill the most sacred cause by a gibe or an epithet. That is because of the *fear* of ridicule. John Bull happily has no fear of ridicule *qua* ridicule. You cannot turn him from his purpose by laughing at him. But once show him that the thing is really worth laughing at, once get him to laugh at himself, and the deed is done. He drops the matter good-naturedly, not sullenly, and therein lies the difference. It was in his appeal to this British characteristic that the major part of Gilbert's success lay. On the other hand, there was,

of course, his caustic wit; his masterly versification; and above all his eminent sense of stagecraft. It is only when one goes through the librettos of other operas that one sees how abnormally gifted Gilbert really was. It is the fate of nearly every opera composer—even the greatest—to have succeeded in spite of his librettist. Sullivan had no such handicap; hence a large measure of his success.

In the old Savoy days one heard many a heated dispute as to whether Gilbert or Sullivan was the chief factor in the popularity of their operas. The usual end of the argument was a compromise on Mantalini lines: "You're both of you right and neither of you wrong. Oh, demmit!"

Such conclusions were only natural then. Gilbert's wit was still topical. It is no longer so. A new generation is here to whom the deck of *H.M.S. Pinafore* is as archaic a sight as a Greek trireme and the problems of *Patience* as unfamiliar as those of Chartism.

Fifty years is a long time, quite long enough for such things as are datable to become dated. Much of Gilbert's work is dated. Sullivan's numbers will never be dated so long as rhythm, melody and choral effect hold their place in music.

In the old argumentative days it was frequently urged that Gilbert's librettos were sufficiently complete to be acted as plays without the music. I wonder who would be bold enough to try the experiment now? But Sullivan's music on the concert platform without any dialogue is a quite frequent occurrence and gives an evening of sheer joy.

To say all this is not to belittle Gilbert. *The Yeomen of the Guard* and *The Gondoliers* are still undated. The satirical librettos killed more foolishness than any argument could have done. The topsy-turvy situations are as undying as *Alice in Wonderland*, and they have, moreover, given a new word to the dictionary. But ask any young persons to-day why they flock to Gilbert and Sullivan, and they will answer with one consent, "For the music." And we who are old enough to remember the original Savoy

productions are now obliged—however reluctantly—to agree that the young generation is right. One of the trials of Old Fogeyism is the exasperating suspicion that young generations always *are* right.

And of all Old Fogeys, the "Gilbert and Sullivan" Old Fogey is the funniest. We meet him in the foyer of the Prince's Theatre whenever the operas revisit Town. He buttonholes you, and, before you can escape, is in full cry with anecdotes about Jessie Bond. Sometimes he is a decorous country parson renewing the thrills of youth, and feeling himself as much a gay dog as in his far-off undergraduate days, when he haunted the stage door of the old Savoy in the hope of a fleeting glimpse of the stars as they stepped into their hansoms. *Eheu fugaces!* I am old enough to remember the first production of *Iolanthe*, but one never realises how the years have flown until some "Old Savoyard" begins "reminiscing." He always talks of the operas as of some glory that has passed. His mentality cannot adjust itself to the fact that they were never more popular than now. He belongs to the period when adoring young ladies worked carpet slippers for the curate. The Vicar's song in *The Sorcerer* lets loose a flood of memories, and he cannot grasp the idea that it is more foreign to and remote from the present generation than a song about the Grand Lama of Thibet. He is a quaint survival, but so very kindly and harmless that one forgets he is a bit of a bore.

What, then, was the secret of the first success of the operas? What is it that gives them a vogue now, when only a few of Offenbach and Planquette survive? Wherein lies their appeal to different generations, to entirely different temperaments, and above all to other nations widely differing from the British? It cannot be their superior stagecraft, for Offenbach and Planquette knew quite well how to "play for a curtain," as did the two Englishmen. But the fact does remain that both Gilbert and Sullivan were masters of stagecraft. Both had the

theatre sense—that subtle (almost indefinable) quality which Italy possesses to the full and Britain does not.

Does anyone doubt this statement? He has only to run down the list of Britons who have written operas to find that Dame Ethel Smyth is our only native composer who has ever really succeeded in getting one over the footlights. (That several British bantlings are putting up a fight is neither here nor there at present.)

But however "untheatrical" the British temperment, the average Briton does react more readily to subleties than is generally supposed.

For that reason I place rhythm as the first factor in the Gilbert and Sullivan success. Gilbert was a master of metre; Sullivan was a master of rhythm. Where the rhythms of Offenbach and Planquette are obvious and limited, those of Sullivan are subtle and of infinite variety. If melody is the soul of music, rhythm is its life. Sullivan's infectious rhythms give to his music that full and complete life which defies death.

The second factor I should define as his skill in choral writing. Neither Offenbach nor Planquette could write choral music. Even the choruses of Puccini (that past-master in stage effects) look terribly amateurish on paper. Sullivan was a product of the organ-loft. The traditions of the organ-loft are deadly weapons in the hands of mediocrities. But for a composer who can rise superior to that environment the knowledge of choral effect which is gained by choir work is an asset that is beyond value. Puccini's choruses get their effect by other than choral means. Sullivan's choruses are pure choral writing.

Another great factor in Sullivan's work is its inevitability. Like Stanford, he was economical in his use of material: never a note too few or too many, hence the feeling that his music was always "just right."

But last of all comes his superlative "stage sense." Lack of this quality has damned more British operas than one likes to think of. Here, of course, he was helped by

his librettist where other British composers have been hampered. But in his department Sullivan's stagecraft was as great as Gilbert's. Without stagecraft the best music must fail on the stage. One has only to think of the ravishing music Vaughan Williams has written for that dismal scene of Hugh the Drover in the stocks to realise this. There we had a composer rising to great heights in spite of his librettist. Sullivan was spared such handicaps and left free to "spread himself" as he chose, with what results the whole world knows.

XIX

THE FUTURE OF OPERA

UNTIL now, opera in England has been a frail exotic. Under Sir Thomas Beecham it assumed something of the character of a hardy annual. We look forward to the time when it will be a perennial, but there is much to be done in the way of education before that can come about. Once upon a time opera (such as it was) was the only form of music to be heard on the stage. Nowadays music on the stage is wellnigh a universal practice. Musical Comedy is a stock article of theatrical commerce; every actor-manager with a new Shakespearean production must needs embellish it with "incidental music" (vocal as well as instrumental); while the musical turns "on the halls" of an almost symphonic character are increasing and multiplying. But the bother of it all is, that while each and any of the above three forms are patronised by the general theatre-going public, opera only appeals to a special public of its own. The average theatre-goer at a loose end on any given evening does not consider it inconsistent with his theatre-going habits to drop in to a musical comedy or a music-hall if he feels so inclined. But the theatre-goer who would "drop in" to opera in the same easy and natural manner has yet to be found. In countries with an operatic tradition the average citizen drops in to the opera as naturally as he goes to the play. The reasons why he does not do so in England are—if multifarious—at least not difficult to disentangle.

One reason lay naturally with operatic ventures themselves. Covent Garden supplied a "summer season," supported for social and not musical reasons. An occasional *impresario* would hire a scratch team of foreigners and run a season at Her Majesty's or some other theatre (usually with disastrous financial results). A few wandering companies would give a week's "show" at the various provincial theatres, and that was all. Then came Gilbert and Sullivan, and the rest of the story we know. The

theatre-going public was left untouched and never acquired the operatic habit.

Another reason lay with the opera-going set (it was too small to be called a public). Instead of being a homogeneous whole—in which event it might possibly have had some effect on public opinion—it was split up into sections between which there was no sort of co-ordination. When Wagner obtained a footing on these shores, there was the Wagnerite opera-goer who would listen to nothing but Wagner, or to such music as affected the Wagnerian big bow-wow. There was also the "Italian" opera-goer, who had no use for Wagner, but who would put up with anything that had a prima donna in it, though she weighed eighteen-stone-ten. The only point on which these two classes ever agreed was in their aversion from native performers. Any hopes of better things from Gilbert and Sullivan's productions were short-lived, since their devotees made a cultus of the business—as intensive and as far removed from the theatre-going world as the Wagnerites and the "Italians."

The fact which must be faced is that musical comedy has become part of our national theatrical life; opera has not. Musical comedy is a recognised thing; opera is hardly a recognised thing, and is a theatrical speculation. We go to a new musical comedy first, and make up our minds about its value afterwards; but we *do go*. With a new opera our time is chiefly spent in making up our minds whether we shall go or not; and as often as not we *don't go*.

Another fact not sufficiently recognised is that in countries with an operatic tradition, the opera is patronised by the same class which in England contents itself with musical comedy. It is that class which, I believe, can be attracted to opera here if properly handled. If the same wisdom of the serpent which is exercised on musical comedy (as regards preliminary working up of public interest by the press agent) were applied to opera, it would

sooner or later have its effect. The public are very like sheep; once you get them to think a certain thing is what they certainly ought to see, they will make a point of seeing it, and drop into the habit of seeing other things like it. Beecham's production of *Näil* was a case in point. Had the easy-going, casual public been made to understand that in point of dresses, scenery, mounting and ballet, it was as bright a spectacle as they could have had "on the halls" or at the Gaiety, they would at any rate have come "to see the show," and might possibly in the future have acquired the habit of attending less spectacular operas.

I believe it possible to make opera less of a speculation by attracting the theatrical "first-nighter." Hitherto he has been repelled by the superior attitude of the Wagnerite and the Italian prima-donna worshipper. Opera was formerly put so disgracefully on the stage that we cannot blame him for looking on it as a sort of glorified concert usurping its functions by the employment of a theatre and scenery. Once let opera be mounted with as much care as musical comedy, and let it get as much preliminary propaganda in the Press, and he will alter his attitude.

Lastly, opera here has suffered from the preposterous critical standards set up by the Davisons and the Chorleys. At a time when we had no musicians in the country, only organists, every octavo anthem of the latter received the serious attention of the reviewer. But never did any new opera receive a good word. Even now we damn new works which in an opera-going country—with its truer sense of proportion—would be accepted as quite tolerable. We cannot expect a masterpiece every time.

XX

POST-WAR ECONOMIES

Most people fight shy of proverbial philosophy, and to begin a dissertation with a quoted proverb is not good style. But I do not see how I am to get out of saying that:

> "It's an ill wind
> That blows nobody good."

I have never been able to discover why this particular aphorism seems to have displaced the more apposite one—about clouds and silver linings—in the optimist's phrase-book, but there it is. And the purport thereof is that apparent disaster inevitably brings comfort unexpected in its train. This is all very evident in music just now. The cost of orchestras, choirs, musical instruments and music-type has soared upwards to a point at which we have had to give up all thought of treading in the old ways. We are all too apt to wring our hands about this, and to wonder how music will survive such a set-back. We forget that although we grow old, there is the young generation following on our heels. The old habits to which we have become attached mean nothing to it.

We who belong to a past generation find ourselves up against new conditions that seem intolerable, and new problems that seem insoluble. We forget that the young generation has been born into the particular problems of to-day quite naturally. They have never known any other conditions, and so what to us seems a welter of confusion, is to them quite the normal condition of things.

It would be strange if youth so far belied itself as to prove unequal to the task of tackling these new problems. On every hand we do see them tackling our "problems" undismayed, and with such success that we shall all be admitting one day how beneficial to music has been the present upheaval.

It is natural that readjustment should come about first in matters of everyday concern, and the theatre is one of them.

In the old days when labour was cheap, every theatre

had its orchestra. The composition of that orchestra was stereotyped; so was its music. Theatrical music-firms had a plentiful supply of stock pieces which were considered the correct thing for overtures and entr'actes. The fact that audiences usually retired to the refreshment buffet during their performance had no effect on theatrical managers, since they, as a class, are more hide-bound by traditional routine than any other. Tradition said that they must have an orchestra; that it must play stereotyped pieces; and that was enough. Theatrical music was a negligible quantity.

Now that the cost of the old orchestra is prohibitive, they must willy-nilly be content with a string quintet and a possible piano or harmonium. This new combination has brought into being a new army of "arrangers," more competent in every way than their fathers and grandfathers who turned out the band parts for the old orchestras. Youth is using to the full the new idiom, and I am only one of many who now find themselves keeping their seats between the acts to listen to the music. Naturally there is not the same degree of interest or competence in every theatre, but the new trend of theatre music is showing itself. It is offering new opportunities to the young musician, of which he will surely avail himself.

In any kind of work, a certain depression of mind always accompanies the change from ample resources to more circumscribed ones. It too frequently paralyses invention, rather than stimulates it. This was at first noticeable in the change from the old theatre orchestra to the new string quintet *under the same conductors*. The music at first attempted was the old type without the old resources. It naturally sounded thin and poor. The old generation of conductor was up against new and, to him, insoluble problems.

No such drawback was experienced in the cinema music. The cinema is new. It began with a strummed piano. Later a violin was added, then a 'cello, and so its musical

resources grew with the growth of the cinema industry. Limited resources which steadily grow bigger carry a certain amount of stimulus and elation. This elation in the cinema, as contrasted with depression in the theatre, has resulted in the music of the former giving a pronounced lead to the latter, and leaving it far behind. The interesting combination of instruments now obtaining in the better-class cinemas would have been impossible had there been no war. The old economic conditions would have been in force, and cinema managers would have resorted to the old theatre orchestra (with its stereotyped repertoire) as the readiest instrument to their hand. They would not have dreamt of an organ, an indispensable instrument in every front-rank cinema now.

And this brings one to the question of the organ. Before the war the organ builder had to consider only two types of instruments—for the church and for the concert-hall. These types gradually became stereotyped, and for at least fifty years there had been no development in organ planning. The tendency was to larger and larger instruments in churches, with a corresponding increase in fancy stops. To the local music teacher who usually played in the ordinary parish church, all this was a godsend. Being a local music teacher, he had naturally no time to qualify as a virtuoso, but he could disguise his lack of technique by the varied "effects" which his overgrown instrument now rendered possible. "Tremulant" and "vox humana" could cover a multitude of technical sins—at any rate with the average parishioner. What the musically inclined parishioner suffered, however, had best be told elsewhere.

Now that small parishes can no longer afford Brobdingnagian organs, the instruments within their means will have to contain less fancy stops, and be built up on a basis of pure diapason tone. The local organist will have no box of tricks to fall back on, and will have to cultivate a decent technique. This will be all for the good of music in

general, and the choir in particular, as the temptation to drown them out with a monster instrument will be removed.

There is a tendency to believe that post-war economies will be a bar to any scheme for municipal orchestras. I am not prepared to accept that conclusion just at present. I have in my mind several watering-places where two bands at least are subsidised. Of course, "the Pump Room Orchestra" enjoys pride of place, but neither it nor "the other one" are so complete as they might be. I fancy it will eventually be found less expensive to keep one full orchestra than two less complete ones. This will give better results musically.

The success of our young composers with small combinations of instruments will, I believe, have a beneficial effect on opera in the future. We do not seem able, at present, to think of opera except in terms of "Grand." Of *opéra intime* we have yet to acquire the conception. Whenever we have tried it, it has only been "Grand" Opera pared and pruned to the level of banality.

We present real light opera in big theatres with the full paraphernalia of Grand Opera, with the result that a work like *The Bo'sun's Mate* gets over the footlights at the Old Vic, and fails to do so at Covent Garden. Now that huge productions are less possible than formerly, we shall be thrown back on real *opéra intime* (with or without spoken dialogue), and a new stimulus will be given to your young composers to establish new forms. If Holst has since fallen from grace in the matter of opera, we must not forget that he did give us a lead with *Savitri*. Let us hope that the economic pressure in the matter of orchestras will not be relieved until other composers have shown what can be done with small groups of instruments.

Another result of economic pressure has been the disappearance of the prima donna—a type of performer who by the glamour of her vocal gymnastics has kept back the clock of operatic progress more than most people are

willing to believe. When there are no more huge fees to be reaped, we shall find less of her prepared to follow art for art's sake, and the number of apprentices to the prima-donna trade will happily diminish. This will be all for the good of music.

These are only a few of the possible benefits to music which will accrue from the present economic conditions, and while we regretfully remember what we have lost, we are entitled to high hopes of the new things that may be achieved under the new conditions.

Composers will be encouraged to adventure in new fields. Capable performers will find equal scope. Concerted music on a smaller scale will secure wider performance than the huge works which have hitherto been possible only in big theatres or concert-halls. It will all make for decentralisation in music. London will always maintain its standard, but small-scale works will now be more possible in the provinces. They will be within the reach of groups of amateurs, and will more nearly touch the home. We shall be less dependent on the recognised opera-houses and concert-halls. We shall become less a nation of music listeners, and more a nation of music makers. We shall more freely work out our own musical salvation than was possible when the foreigner dictated what music was, or was not, good for us.

XXI

LATTER-DAY PROBLEMS

I READ a leading article recently on the passing of the domestic silver on which each family prides itself, the glitter and shine of which is the criterion of a good housewife and a well-kept household.

It pointed out that we shall never again have the old wealth of domestic help which was necessary to keep our silver bright, so there is nothing to do now but await with calmness the passing of one more domestic glory, and to keep our wits awake for the invention of labour-saving substitutes.

Already the brass tap has disappeared from scullery, kitchen and bathroom, and we are getting used to its oxidised successor. Silver and pewter cruets will soon follow it. In fact, there is a shock in store for the unobservant who will awake to the fact (not so very long from now) that in every home, china—or some other form of earthenware—has supplanted the silver, brass and other precious metals to which the eye was accustomed.

The bearing of all this on music is not so remote as would at first sight appear. We are living in changed times. Pre-war standards and pre-war habits and customs are gone, never to return. The new order of things has invaded every department of our national life. Not that there is anything surprising in that. The thing has happened before, and will happen again. We have had wars, revolutions and upheavals in the past, and we shall have them again. But it has ever been the Britisher's pride and boast that national or international cataclysms might come and go, but the Englishman's Home was his Castle, on which the storms of political strife would beat in vain. Thrones might totter and fall, but the Britisher would still have his bacon and eggs for breakfast, his housewife would still have her glittering silver, his cook her burnished brass.

The still-room maid is passing; the domestic help who was her equivalent in less affluent households has already

gone. Our silver is packed away; our glass may one day follow. The Englishman's Home is no longer his Castle, and amid its ruins only the British Breakfast survives.

It would seem strange if music were the only department in life to be unaffected by these changed conditions. It is being affected in many ways, and to an alarming degree. The changes are happening with extraordinary rapidity, and will be upon us with all their problems before we have had time to awake and adjust ourselves to them—at least, if I am any judge of our British mentality.

Has anyone noticed—for example—the disappearance of serious musical criticism from papers in which it was once a feature? The syndication of our newspapers is partially responsible for this since the sub-editorial policy became "news" first, last and all the time. The greatest artist may appear on our platforms, the greatest composer produce a new work, the most competent critic write an illuminating notice thereon, and it is a thousand-to-one chance if the notice is not boiled down (in the sub-editorial kettle) to a few colourless lines.

But let a ten-year-old prodigy play the chants and hymns at St. Esau's, Wigan, or St. Jacob's, Easton-super-Mare, or let an octogenarian cowkeeper perpetrate his seventy-second consecutive choir practice at Slumpton-in-the-Wold, and we have a column about both, with photographs *ad lib.*

One mustn't blame the poor sub-editor. The policy of syndicated newspapers is now dictated from above. It used to be "news" first, but I am informed by a distinguished critic that it must now be "the human touch." In other words, you may get a bit of genuine criticism printed if you conceal it in a "human" document about the artist or composer having ridden an alligator on the banks of the Tigris after saddling and bridling the beast for that purpose.

We have hardly finished congratulating ourselves that musical criticism is no longer written by the man who does

the fires and the police notices, when along comes the Syndicated Press with its "human touch," and, hey presto! we are again back to Methuselah.

Has anyone noticed the vast space taken up in each paper by broadcasting notices and notes? And if so, have they realised the revolution that it indicates? Thousands of those who used to attend concerts now "listen in" at home. I am credibly informed that an organisation which for many years has successfully run high-class concerts now loses £150 on each performance. So much for concert-giving.

Has anyone noticed that with the multiplication of gramophones, piano-players and broadcasting stations fewer and fewer people buy music to play at home on the ancestral piano? They can hear it better played (or sung) by mechanical means. So much for music-selling.

And this brings us to the question of composers' and publishers' profits. In former days music-selling provided a publisher with profits and a composer with royalties. "Mechanical rights of reproduction" were comparatively negligible, and were usually left in the composer's hands. Now, however, the composer will have to look for his royalties less to printed copies and more to "mechanical rights of reproduction."

If the publisher's profits on sales are to dwindle in this manner, it is unlikely that he will sit down quietly and not cast a covetous eye on "mechanical rights." He will probably insist on a share of them with the composer. Here are two opposing points of view, and the end is not in sight. So much for profit-making.

That composers' rights should be respected and protected is only bare justice. That a society should exist for the collection of "performing" fees appears reasonable enough on the surface. But the whole question presents yet another problem which, at present, is far from solution.

If a singer is not too fastidious about the quality of the

stuff he sings, he can confine himself to shop ballads, and —in addition to the fee he receives from the promoter of the concert—reap an additional income from any of the publishing firms who pay vocalists to sing their publications.

But if he elects to sing good music and by his talents gives publicity to worthy but unknown composers, no kind publisher is at hand to present him with a performing fee. *He* must be the person to pay even the usual "Performing Right" fee. It is surely an anomalous state of affairs that a singer should be rewarded for singing inferior songs, and mulct in what are practically damages for singing good ones. So much for altruism in music.

Has anyone noticed further, that after all the labours of Sir Thomas Beecham to indigenise (forgive a coined word) opera in our midst, our composers who wish to score for an orchestra of any size have still to get their operas produced abroad, and come back with a continental *cachet* before we will listen to them? Lord Berners (who had to produce his *Le Carrosse* in Paris) is a case in point to-day, just as Dame Ethel Smyth was a case in point years ago.

Furthermore, the high cost of orchestras has turned composers to the employment of new formulas involving lesser instrumental resources, and this is all for the good of art. But in the case of opera it has proved a disastrous handicap. So much for orchestras.

XXII

MECHANICAL MUSIC

How quickly music gets out of old ruts! Since the war it has gone on doing so with startling rapidity. To all appearances things are much what they were, but the subtle changes are all the more manifest to those who look about them with interest.

I have already remarked on the number of London dailies that have apparently abandoned—if not their music critic, musical criticism. That is to say, musical criticism in the shape of articles and concert reports. But it would seem that this does not mean the jettisoning of music altogether. On the contrary, we find musical comments and musical criticism cropping up in corners where they had not appeared before. "Beachcomber" in the *Daily Express* is not guiltless of allusions to music. "Mr. London," "Mr. Gossip" and other paragraphists for the illustrated press take music under their wing every now and then. They regard music as fit subject-matter for chatty paragraphs, along with books, people and pictures. Not only this, but we have Mr. Arnold Bennett and others writing on musical subjects as naturally as though the art had never been taboo amongst men of letters—and that not so very long ago.

It is a healthy sign that we are scrapping (almost without knowing it) the old convention that music was a "gift"; you were either born with it or you were not. If you were, then you were privileged for the rest of your life to lay down the law to those who weren't.

The truth is that very few people indeed are born without the musical sense. As a nation we are all potential musicians, and are quite capable of both understanding and appreciating music to the same degree that we can understand and appreciate all the other things which go to make up general culture.

Musical practitioners were for so long divorced from every other form of culture that it is no wonder they formed a caste; a despised caste amongst men of learning, but a

caste nevertheless. They were outside the national life; they had nothing in common with either the learned or the unlearned. The latter no doubt regarded them as gifted persons standing apart, and the former without doubt despised them as illiterate, or, at best, unlearned in all the things that mattered. But so far as the musician or his music was concerned, there was a general agreement amongst both classes of Britons to "leave him to it," in undisturbed possession of a "gift" that in its origin was natal rather than intellectual.

It is this "gift" legend that has harmfully affected our musical life more than anything else which I can think of at the moment. We might not like long-haired tenors or capricious prima donnas, but we credited them with the "gift" of song and employed armies of professional critics to give them the inevitable Press notices every time they appeared in public. We have spoilt public singers more than we have spoilt any other race of musical performers. We have allowed them the privilege of unintelligibility (witness the "book of words" provided at every recital). We may have wished that it were humanly possible to hear (without the "book of words") what they were singing about. But, believing them to be "gifted" people, we took it for granted that if they could not sing and pronounce intelligibly at one and the same time, then the thing must be impossible of accomplishment. There are still people who believe this, though at every Competitive Festival you have school children as well as adults singing *the same sort of music* with perfect diction—with a clear articulation that renders their words intelligible in the remotest corners of large public halls.

In fact, the modest Briton has been so long accustomed to credit any musical practitioner (of whatever sort) with the possession of a "gift" which he himself did not possess, that he has been content to form his musical opinions (if any) on what the practitioner might choose to tell him. If the practitioner condemns any form of

music, the layman retires into his shell. He may not abjure that particular form, but at least he may be relied upon to enjoy it in secret, or at any rate away from the practitioner's eyes or ears.

That is exactly what happened to the gramophone and the pianola. The musical practitioner said that they were soulless and mechanical travesties of a "living art." He anticipated the modern Press editor by being first in the field with the phrase "the human touch." No machine-made reproduction (so we were told) could compare with the human touch of a Paderewski or a Caruso while, as to the orchestra, the idea was barbaric. Well, we were driven in upon ourselves, and derived much furtive pleasure from the condemned gramophone. We fostered the pianola until it blossomed into the piano-player, and not until it had appeared on Queen's Hall platform, playing a concerto with Henry Wood's orchestra, did we begin to realise that the musical practitioner was—as he invariably is—wrong, and that we were right.

We now find that not only can the piano-player give us concertos with perfect expression, but that it can also play the accompaniments to our songs with greater sympathy and reliability than the organist-teacher who denounces it as inartistic. We find the gramophone installed in schools as almost the only medium by which the orchestral idiom can be taught to children. In short, mechanical music has arrived. But whither is it leading us? "That" (as some writer or other has observed) "is another story."

The truth is that in more spheres than that of politics we have become the slaves of catchwords. We are horribly afraid of catchwords and epithets, even though neither will bear analysis. The music teacher frightened us in the first instance by speciously flourishing in our faces a string of catchwords which on first glance seemed interchangeable, but on inspection proved themselves to be nothing of the sort.

Music formerly played by human fingers was in due

course played by the pianola. The pianola is mechanical, and so it was easy to fling the epithet "mechanical" at the music it produced. Using "mechanical" in its colloquial sense, the epithet became one of opprobrium. From "mechanical" to "machine-made" was an easy transition, and (intoxicated with the exuberance of his own epithet-making) the musical practitioner was not long in evolving such correlative catchwords as "soulless" and "lifeless."

How childish this whole pose is if pushed to its logical conclusion! Unless we are to confine the art solely to unaccompanied vocal music, there is no department of it in which mechanism of some sort does not intervene between composer and listener. What is any orchestral instrument but a piece of mechanism? What is a piano but a piece of very "soulless" mechanism? Above all, what is an organ but a piece of highly complicated mechanism?

None of all these instruments has any artistic life until the technique of the player supplies it. But how many potential players there are who have had no time to acquire that technique! How many of those whose duty it is to play organs of a Sunday have more than a modest amount of real technical ability? And yet your highbrow will actually have us believe that the dull performance of a Bach fugue by a poor technician is alive, and the brilliant performance of the same fugue by a piano-player is mechanical. The real fact is that the average organist's indifferent technique is one more barrier between the composer and the listener. His technique is faulty, that of the "mechanical" piano-player is perfect. By substituting the latter for the former you have only added one more piece of mechanism to the organ (or piano). It is only a question of degree, not of principle.

If you are going to be logical you must scrap the piano because it interposes hammers, jacks, dampers and suchlike mechanical contrivances between the performer and

his "human touch upon the strings." In other words, we must get back to King David and his harp. What rubbish the whole thing is!

But the highbrow case breaks down most completely when the argument is advanced (quite seriously) that there is no art in the piano-player for example, because any Tom, Dick or Harry can set the machine going and play tunes upon it. Dear, dear! We are to christen it inartistic because unskilled Tom, Dick, and also any number of Harrys plough through the tunes mechanically without a conception of nuances—in other words, making a horrid inartistic row. I admit that the unskilled person can make a dreadful racket on the "soulless" pianola, but it is nothing to the blood-curdling noise he can produce on the "soulful" violin; so what becomes of the argument?

Like every other instrument, the piano-player will make music or mere noise according to the ability of the manipulator. Two things are necessary to make music on an instrument—digital technique and artistic feeling. You may possess any amount of either, but it is of no use alone. No amount of artistic capacity will avail if you are hampered by your technique. The piano-player eliminates this handicap, and leaves the artistic performer free to give—not a mere manipulation of notes, as the highbrow asserts—but a real "reading" of the music. The mechanism has now been brought to such an advanced stage that there is hardly a nuance that cannot be brought off effectively on the piano-player by a sympathetic performer with artistic insight.

XXIII

MAKING HISTORY

It is not always those changes in the established order of things that come in with clash of arms that are the most enduring. Triumphal entries often breed reprisals, and ultimate settlement hangs indefinitely on the issue of conflict.

The changes which establish themselves most surely are those which steal on us imperceptibly—almost unawares. Yesterday we were all thinking in one groove; to-day we find ourselves—to our surprise—thinking in another. How it has all come about we hardly know. We only feel that everything is different, and the old *clichés* and the old arguments that had served us well now seem to have lost their meaning. So subtle and intangible is the whole business that we are at a loss to account for it; but there it is, a *fait accompli*, and we must accept it as best we may.

We have seen the thing happen often enough in the world of music. It seems not so long ago that we could not imagine *Tristan* anywhere save at Covent Garden; and as to *Parsifal* with a touring company, it was outside all reason. We took little account of Beecham until we found he had created a public for a wider scheme of opera than the prima-donna-ridden season had dreamed of. The whole thing was upon us before we knew it was there, and we can never tread the old operatic ruts again. Beecham made history, and world-famed prima donnas are now no more than names.

In academic circles it has been much the same story. It seems only the other day that learned doctors forgathered at the Musical Association; listened to papers on "consecutive fifths," and solemnly discussed the same. Who ever speaks of consecutive fifths now?

Much more recently I remember the uproar in academic circles when one or two daring spirits ventured to speak disrespectfully of "the five species" and other apparatus of academic counterpoint. The science was sacrosanct,

and the vested interests involved (to wit, the army of Doctors whose livelihood depended on coaching, or examining for degrees and diplomas) were so formidable that escape from the web of musical arithmetic seemed a vain hope. Then one fine day we woke up to find that the younger universities had counterpoint examinations into which the "five species" did not enter; that Oxford had followed suit; that noted professors were actually teaching modal counterpoint in conjunction with the study of the most advanced composers. How did it all happen? Nobody seems to know. All that we do know is that the dismal science that used to be dignified with the honoured name of counterpoint is fast being ousted from one stronghold after another. Even in the Royal College of Organists no such things as tritone fourths are ever mentioned now, and a friend of mine vouches for the fact that he has not heard the cabalistic formula of *Nota Cambiata* so much as uttered there for the space of at least ten years.

We shall never tread the old academic ruts again, thanks to our young composers! They have shown us a counterpoint as skilful as it is free. They have attempted live music in place of dead formulæ. They have made history.

Some years ago I happened to say to one of the pioneers in the Competitive Music Festival movement that it would be a great idea to celebrate the centenary of William Byrd by getting every committee in the country to put down a few tests taken from the works of Byrd for the festivals of 1923. His reply was that competitors would not stand it. A few of the more popular madrigals here and there might not be amiss, but anything like a quantity of them would be resented. Committees would not court failure by setting tests which would be certain to antagonise competitors, and reduce the number of entries.

But there is another side to the movement which is apt to be overlooked—the literary.

By the nineteenth century there was an almost complete

divorce between music and poetry. The best composers naturally turned to the best lyrics, but the words of the most popular music were usually by the literary hack. Songs, part-songs and cantatas were equally beneath contempt.

In the works of Elizabethan madrigalists and lutenists one never finds this defect. The words are invariably on a level with the music.

We are all, by this time, acquainted with the Elizabethan poets and dramatists. But this knowledge has not extended to the hundreds of anonymous writers of verse utilised by the madrigalists and song-writers of the period. Such a voluminous output by men whose very names are unknown to us proves that, besides the great writers, the minor poet flourished in no mean degree. The banality of the modern ballad never appears in his work. One rarely comes upon a pointless verse. While the modern popular ballad-writer always has three verses in which to take the consumptive choirboy up to heaven or to say "Good-bye for ever" to his *fiancée*, the popular madrigal writer had to accomplish his task mostly in a single stanza. And how perfect those stanzas were!

> "April is in my mistress' face,
> And July in her eyes hath place;
> Within her bosom is September,
> But in her heart a cold December."

Where the Victorian ballad-writer makes his effects by the repetition of some banal tag, the Elizabethan gives point to his verse—however slight its texture—by some delicate fancy in the last line:

> "My bonny lass she smileth
> When she my heart beguileth.
> Smile less, dear love, therefore,
> And you shall love me more.
> When she her sweet eye turneth,
> O how my heart it burneth!
> Dear love, call in their light,
> Or else you'll burn me quite!"

Unrequited love may be a stereotyped theme, and your Elizabethan minor poet might be equally stereotyped in his "last line" formula, but he is always fanciful, and makes his point gracefully:

> "I always loved to call my lady Rose,
> For in her cheeks do roses sweetly glose;
> And from her lips she such sweet odours threw,
> As roses do 'gainst Phœbus' morning view.
> But when I thought to pull't, hope was bereft me,
> My Rose was gone, and nought but prickles left me."

> "Do you not know how Love first lost his seeing?
> Because with me once gazing
> On those fair eyes, where all powers have their being,
> She with her beauty blazing,
> Which death might have revived,
> Him of his sight, and me of heart deprived."

Shakespeare's use of technical terms, both nautical and musical, is evidence that they were both the common property of a nation absorbed in adventures on sea and equally daring adventures in harmony. The sea-rover would appear equally at home amidst the rocks and shoals of musical technique, as witness the following by Sir Walter Raleigh (set to music by Orlando Gibbons):

> "What is our life? a play of passion.
> Our mirth the *music of division.*
> Our mothers' wombs the tiring-houses be,
> Where we are dressed for this short comedy.
> Heaven the judicious sharp spectator is,
> That sits and marks still who doth act amiss.
> Our graves that hide us from the searching sun
> Are like drawn curtains when the play is done.
> Thus march we, playing, to our latest rest,
> Only we die in earnest, that's no jest."

The words I have italicised show that Raleigh knew the technical meaning of "divisions" ("variations" on a ground-bass) as well as Sir Andrew Aguecheek.

Even cheerful irresponsibility had a certain pawky philosophy behind it:

"Ha ha! ha ha! This world doth pass
Most merrily I'll be sworn,
For many an honest Indian ass
Goes for a unicorn.
Fara diddle dyno,
This is idle fyno.

"Tie hie! tie hie! O sweet delight!
He tickles this age that can
Call Tulliaes ape a marmasyte
And Ledaes' goose a swan.
Fara diddle dyno,
This is idle fyno.

"So so! so so! Fine English days!
For false play's no reproach,
For he that doth the coachman praise
May safely use the coach.
Fara diddle dyno,
This is idle fyno."

There were not wanting highbrows in those days, for we find one of them protesting against the prostitution of music to "Tie hies."

Even when wit was laboured it did not lack point:

"Tell me, dear, fain would I know,
Mean you 'Nay' when you say 'No'?
Turn but 'No,' and you'll discover,
'Tis 'On' we mean unto a lover!"

But the choicest humour of the madrigalists is shown in the collection in praise of Elizabeth (*The Triumphs of Oriana*), to which all save Byrd and one or two others contributed. The following is a specimen of the type of verse employed:

"Come, gentle swains, and shepherds' dainty daughters,
Adorned with courtesy and comely duties,
Come, sing and joy and grace with lovely laughters
The birthday of the beautiest of the beauties.
Then sang the shepherds and nymphs of Diana:
'Long live fair Oriana!'"

These madrigals ranged over a wide field and sounded the entire gamut of musical expression. But they all

ended with the same tag: "Then sang the shepherds," etc. Here the music invariably became grandiose. The earnest solemnity which cathedral lay-clerks and other madrigal singers used to put into these lines was comical, when every bar shows that at this point the composers (being called upon to flatter a gaunt and bedizened virgin queen) with one accord put their tongues into their cheeks and let themselves go.

Although Byrd, as a madrigalist, does not carry the same popular appeal as Weelkes and others, he exhibits the most ready response to good verse. In his lighter moods, such ones as the following explain themselves:

"I thought that Love had been a boy
With blinded eyes;
Or else some other wanton toy
That men devise,
Like tales of fairies often told,
By doting age that dies for cold."

But he is happiest in such lines as these:

"Is Love a boy? What means he then to strike?
Or is he blind? Why will he be a guide?
Is he a man? Why doth he hurt his like?
Is he a god? Why doth he men deride?
Not one of these, but one compact of all.
A wilful boy, a man still dealing blows,
Of purpose blind to lead men to their thrall,
A god that rules unruly, God he knows!
Boy, pity me that am a child again.
Blind, be no more my guide to make me stray.
Man, use thy might to force away my pain.
God, do me good and lead me to my way,
And if thou beest a power to me unknown,
Power of my life, let here thy grace be shown."

That he was something of a poet himself will be seen from his paraphrase of Psalm cxxvi. 5-7, in his *Psalmes, Songs and Sonnets:*

"Turn our captivity, O Lord, as a brook in the south.
They that sow in tears shall reap in joyfulness.
Going they went, and wept, casting their seeds; but coming they shall come with jollity, carrying their sheaves with them."

I have called attention to these specimens of verse, because the revival of Elizabethan music, if intelligently pursued, will bring a working acquaintance with Elizabethan prosody into quarters where it has hitherto been unknown. That will be a piece of history worth making.

I have chiefly spoken of modern history-makers. But the British nation in the past has made musical history to a greater extent than has been generally understood.

From the days of Charles II until now, we have been so long under the domination of the foreigner, that any knowledge of our own musical heritage has been confined to a few students.

Of course, it has been fairly generally known (since 1710) that the earliest specimen of part-music with any pretensions to style was the work of a monk of Reading (*Sumer is icumen in*, by John of Fornsete, thirteenth century). But how great a revolution his work was, breaking away as it did from all that had gone before it, is perhaps best realised by modernists, as they show more sympathy for, and understanding of, medieval music than it has ever received at the hands of classicists or academics.

What this Englishman began, other Englishmen did not develop until the arrival of John of Dunstable. But the seed was sown, even if it took long to come to fruition.

With Dunstable (who died in 1423) English music entered upon a new phase. Form and structure—so conspicuously lacking in musical art—now made their appearance. That the Flemings achieved great things in a form of choral music of which Josquin's compositions marked the flood-tide and Lasso's the ultimate goal is a matter of history. But their achievements were only the logical development of the art of Dunstable. They carried on a tradition, but it was the Englishman that made history.

In text-books of musical history it is common to find the statement that keyboard music may be said to have begun with Scarlatti. But here again it was an Englishman, and not an Italian, that made history.

We are beginning to find—from the increasing number of performances on virginals, clavichords and harpsichords—that these instruments are not the tinkling futilities that we have been taught to consider them. The music written for them in Elizabethan times was of a high order, demanding both artistic insight and great technical skill.

Just as Dunstable first brought form and structure to choral music, so did the Englishman, Hugh Aston, bring the same attributes to keyboard in the early sixteenth century. Henry Davey calls him the inventor of keyboard music, and although the title could be more properly applied to William Byrd, it is certainly true that we must regard him as a worthy pioneer.

If we as a nation have subscribed to the common belief that it is only from Germany that real music has come, we would do well if (in no chauvinistic spirit) we remembered that Englishmen were leaders in the art, before a note of German music of any value had been written.

After remaining in complete national ignorance of the fact, we are now beginning to learn that in the art of song (as it is now understood), Englishmen have indeed made history. The work of the English Lutenists (only now beginning to be rescued from oblivion) is being so generally discussed as to relieve me from the task of doing more than refer to it. But we may well hold up our heads with pride, and remember that Dowland, Campion, Cavendish, Corkine, Cooper, Attey, Bartlet, Danyel, Ford, Greaves, Hume, Robert Jones, Maynard, Morley, Peerson, Pilkington and Rosseter were our countrymen.

Now that British music is entering on a new period of activity we are at last becoming aware, too, of the great part which we played in music of the past. It ought to be our pride to remember (now that the long period of torpor under foreign domination is over) that if our young musicians are asserting themselves now, they are not so much taking possession of a new world as taking possession once more of their ancient national heritage.

XXIV

COMPOSERS AND THEIR APOLOGISTS

It is good to see how calmly music (real music, I mean) goes on its way; in spite of the reams that are written about it; oblivious of the authorities who would shepherd it into this or that groove. (They, of course, would say channel, not groove.)

I do not know whether things are better or worse for the general public since musical criticism became elevated into a profession, but—thanks to the essential sanity of the true creative artist—music itself seems not a penny the worse, or better.

One thing, however, to my mind, seems to stand out prominently, and that is that modern though we may think ourselves to be, we have not yet shaken off the Victorian habit of trying to find a message in every form of art. This is most pronounced in music, which notoriously lags behind the other arts so far as critical methods are concerned. Even *Alice in Wonderland* (with its "and the moral of that is") failed to laugh us out of the habit. In Ruskin that particular critical method achieved its *reductio ad absurdum*, and painting has been more or less rid of the nuisance ever since.

Looking back on the multitude of tomes which used to deliver to us the "message" of Wagner's music, and reflecting (in our present-day familiarity with his scores) how we have more or less got to the bottom of all that he had to "teach" us, and reflecting further that his "message" (or moral, or whatever you like to call it) is something very different from what his Wagnerite contemporaries preached, we ought to have been warned, by that particular experience at least, how futile it is to read a message (more especially a moral) into a vital art creation.

Who are we to lay this work of supererogation upon ourselves when the creative artist disclaims any such pretence? In this connexion I often think of a friend—a famous artist—who (at an exhibition of his paintings)

was once asked by an exalted personage to "explain to me all about your pictures." His simple and two-edged reply was, "Madam, I fear I cannot." I once attempted to discover which of the two possible meanings he intended to convey, and got a third and obviously right one: "How the devil was I to know what my pictures mean?"

In music—if only predicatorial scribes would let us alone—the same principle holds good. I once had a necessary lesson in that respect from one of our most original composers. Having to conduct a work of his, I was rather perturbed about a certain number in it. The number in question was devoid of tempo marks and dynamic signs, and I was nervous as to whether or not my reading rightly interpreted the composer's intentions. I therefore applied to him for guidance, only to be told, "I don't know how it ought to go. You just do what you think best." I was not long in discovering what a fine answer I had received. It was the modest disclaimer of a sincere creative artist of any intention to preach an evangel or deliver a message.

Of *course* he knew what he had written, and why he had written it. But the obvious thing to remember (if we only *would* remember) is that if a creative artist has chosen a certain medium of self-expression, we ought to let it go at that. Criticism of an artist's work is one thing. Finding (or worse still, explaining) its message or its moral is quite another.

The above remarks are prompted by three books with which I recently whiled away the tedium of several long railway journeys. One is all about Scriabin and the other two deal with him incidentally.

I quote from the Scriabin book, and would ask what *does* the author mean us to understand by the following?—

"The spirit (the creative principle) is conscious of a polarity of the masculine and feminine elements, the one active, the other passive, the will and the resistance. The latter element, inactive and inert, becomes crystallised

in the immobility of the material forms, in the World with its manifold phenomena. The separated poles reach in their separation a culminating point: the complete materialisation and differentiation, the loss of any connection with the Deity. (In art—a division of its branches, formerly united, and the development of each branch in itself.) At this extreme point there arises a reaction in favour of a reunion: the World's love for the Spirit and *vice versa*—a mystical Eros. The purpose of the separation is achieved: the creative substance has left its mark on the matter and there begins a process of dematerialisation, reunion. (In art—the union of separate arts, their synthesis.) This reunion is completed by means of the *Mystery*, the mystical act of the caresses of the Spirit and the World. There will ensue a mystical union taking a form that cannot as yet be comprehended. This will be universal Death and new Life, a world cataclysm destroying physical life. . . ."

As an interested student, and (I trust) an admirer, of much Scriabin music, I hope my self-control in not saying "Rats" will be duly noted and appreciated.

If it comes to pointing morals I venture to think that more pertinent and relevant than the above would be the one attached to the historic ballad of *The Presbyterian Cat.* The legend tells how the sinfu' cat killed a mouse upo' the Sawbaith Day, and was haled before the Meenister, for admonition, sentence and ultimate execution. The moral (equally applicable to the "Mystery" on which Scriabin scribes preach so eloquently) being that

> "The higher up the plum tree grows,
> The sweeter grow the plums;
> The mair the cobbler plies his trade,
> The braider grow his thumbs."

I remember Mr. Zangwill once telling us the story of a journalist who combined the functions of music critic and art critic, knowing nothing of either music or pictures. He camouflaged his ignorance by the simple process of using

artistic terminology when writing on music, and *vice versa.* A new musical work would be discussed as to its chiaroscuro, its perspective, its colour-scheme, and what not. A picture would be called a symphony, or a scherzo pitched in a minor key. He was never found out.

"And the moral of that is" that you can always become an oracle provided you are sufficiently meaningless and obscure when you write—especially on music.

XXV

MUSIC-LOVERS AND CONCERT-GOERS

An absence from London (be it long or short) with its daily round of "concerts and recitals" sets one thinking very often to what extent public performances are a part of the music-lover's life, and how far their influence is beneficent.

If their function is merely to please the senses, to add colour to lives spent in drab surroundings or uninteresting pursuits, to afford relief from strenuous mental toil, then they fulfil it. But as an educational factor, in widening the music-lover's outlook and increasing his knowledge, one doubts if they take us very far. Individuals with a taste for literature feed it by reading books, and continuing to read books. It would be a poor smattering they would get if their efforts were confined to attending lectures or going to plays. At any rate, no one would take them seriously if they adopted a literary pose on the strength of what they had picked up in the lecture-room. But it is no uncommon thing to meet musical amateurs who lay down the law on the strength of mere attendance at concerts. Take away their concerts, and how much music would they be able to talk about?

There is a wide difference between the concert-goer and the music-lover. The latter thankfully listens to every possible good concert, but his real education goes on in the home. He has no belief in vicarious music, save as a means to an end—his wider culture.

He realises that if concerts went on all the year round (which, thank heaven, they don't) he could attend only a paltry 365 of them in a year. He would hear a good deal that was new; a greater amount of what was already familiar; but a still greater amount of stale repetition of a limited repertoire by conductors and recitalists.

But as we can't all put in 365 concerts per annum, we do the next best thing. And what does it all amount to? At most (at any rate, for the average person) about a

dozen attendances during the season—hardly what one would call a liberal education in music.

The person whose business in life leaves him little or no time for books is modest enough not to talk books, but the person who can't (or won't) find time for music, and only attends concerts, does talk music, and that in no uncertain tone. It is this shallow cocksureness about music that is so boring to the ordinary educated man. No ignorant person could talk literature or art without being found out *instanter*. But in music our Toms, Dicks and Harrys say any absurd thing they like, and go on saying it with impunity. The educated person shrugs his shoulders, and—if he bothers to criticise them at all—says it is only music they are talking about.

"Only music." That is the crux. The contempt of the scholar for music is not ill-founded. Ever since we, as a nation, ceased to be music makers and resolved ourselves into a nation of music listeners, that contempt has been well deserved. The foreigner came over with his music, just as Barnum came over with his menagerie. We took our musical marching orders from the showman. Where the showman is, art is not. So what more natural than that otherwise cultured people should assess music in the light of its professors, and hold it too cheap a thing to be admitted into the circle of the arts and sciences? I have never heard an educated person sneer at painting; I have heard dozens sneer at music. One may be sorry for this limitation in their intellectual make-up, but can we blame them?

This century has seen the renascence of British music; but this century is very young yet, and the memories of the middle-aged belong to its predecessor. In the nineteenth century the musical profession was distinguished by its illiteracy. Middle-aged educated men (who remember all this) have not yet adjusted themselves to the new order of things. They have not yet taken the intellectual measure of our young composers. But the day cannot

be far off when they will become aware of the passing (let us hope for ever) of the illiterate showman in music. Then music will again take its appointed place in the scheme of a full, cultured life, as it did in the days of Spenser and Shakespeare.

We take it as a sign of decadence in sport when the multitude flocks to see a select few play games, instead of playing games itself. But if our pursuit of football does only extend to attending league matches, we have not yet lost the consciousness that we could play the game ourselves if we wanted to.

But our long course of foreign tutelage in music has reduced us to accept it as an axiom that only the specially gifted few can be musicians and that proficiency in the art is not for the multitude.

This pernicious fallacy is bolstered up by comparison between music and painting. Only a select few can become painters it is said, and quite truly, too. But while an equally select few ever become composers, that is not the end of the matter. Painting is wholly creative. Music is both creative and reproductive. A masterpiece of painting once painted is finished. A master-work of music is recreated every time a performer or a body of performers can be secured to play or sing it.

It is not given to everyone to acquire skill in playing an instrument, but everyone (save, perhaps, one per cent.) has something of a voice and an ear. For this reason it is possible for everyone—not mentally disqualified—to learn to read music. The Elizabethans could do it; in fact, it was considered a disgrace for any educated person not to be able to "bear his part" in a madrigal.

It is again our foreign tutelage that has fostered the fallacy that the capacity to read music is a "gift," confined to the few. It is no more a "gift" than is reading from a book. It only seems wonderful and exceptional to those who can't do it themselves, just as the faculty of forming words from black marks in a book seems wonderful to the

savage. The truth is that anyone with average intelligence who possesses an ear can learn to read music. The reason we cannot all do it is merely that the teaching of it in schools has been insufficient. When it becomes a part of our educational system, we shall once more be able to make concerted music in the home as our forefathers did. We shall again become a nation of Music Makers.

XXVI

PUBLIC-SCHOOL MUSIC

MUSIC in the public school has made great strides since the days of Tom Brown, when—

> "Brave Broke waved his sword,
> Crying, Now, my lads, aboard,
> And we'll stop their playing Yankee Doodle dandy-oh."

The subject is a wide one, and this chapter as I originally wrote it was a fairly bulky one. But before it went to press, there appeared the first authoritative *book* on the subject,[1] which rendered my mere *chapter* superfluous, save on one point. It is therefore a pleasure to scrap all the rest of my remarks, and confine myself to that one point.

We all know how the end of each summer term brings the usual press reports of "Speech Day" in this or that public school. We read nothing about the music, for such music as ever does find its way into a Speech Day programme is not usually worth mentioning. The "Speeches" are in reality "Half-hours with the Best Authors." They are recited either in English or any other language equally foreign to the average public-school boy.

The tags from Aristophanes or Æschylus could be learnt by rote and delivered with ease by the veriest little duffer at a preparatory school; but in our public schools this childish exercise is given to members of the sixth form, many of whom are already first-rate classics. The schoolmaster sees nothing humorous in the spectacle, nor the British parent anything humiliating in his lad (who has probably already won his scholarship at Balliol or Trinity, where he will enter in October) mounting the rostrum and reeling off Gems from the Classics, for all the world like a member of a Young Men's Mutual Improvement Society

[1] *Music and Boyhood*, by Thomas Wood, M.A., D.Mus. (Oxford University Press.)

reciting *Paradise Lost* or *Casabianca* to the revellers at a Sunday-school treat.

In medieval times academic speeches justified their title. Even fifty years ago public-school "Speeches" had this relevancy—that they were exercises in public recitation during a period when every good boy was an embryo statesman whose aim it was to learn "elocution" and fit himself for "public life." But nowadays the reciter is a horror; the recitation a bore; and the mere quotation of the first line of a popular recitation by the comedian will set any music-hall rocking with laughter. We may therefore reasonably ask how much longer the public school is to be the one forlorn spot (except the Sunday school) where the ridiculous recitation habit still endures. And the laughable part is that in the Sunday-school performance everyone at least understands what is being recited, but at the public-school Speech Day they only pretend to; for pater has long since forgotten his Greek, and his spouse never learnt it.

Sooner or later this hebetudinous exhibition will be laughed out of existence; but meantime—if we must still endure tags from the classics—why not turn loose the school musical society and let them sing, for example, the parabasis from *The Frogs* to Parry's splendid music? That at least would be understood. But would it not be still better to set aside sufficient time for the performance of the complete play?

To learn to act a Greek play—with costumes, scenery and music—is an intellectual exercise; to recite extracts from one is not. Greek plays (unlike Latin ones) lend themselves to musical treatment. Modern composers—Parry, Stanford, Harford Lloyd, Vaughan Williams, Abdy Williams, Charles Wood, Dr. Rowton and Dr. Bussell—have provided many such settings from which we can choose. Under these conditions only the chorus need do any singing; the actors need not know a note of music—

ideal conditions for a school performance. "Speeches" employ a handful of the school; a Greek play would give employment to as many performers as one chose (the traditional chorus of fifteen for a tragedy and twenty-four for a comedy need not now be adhered to), all of whom would derive profit from the classical point of view. The beauty of Greek drama would become a living thing to them, which it certainly is not under present conditions. Nor would parents and guardians be bored as they are now by the "Speeches." With the aid of music, scenery, dresses and action, they could follow intelligently—a thing they are far from doing at present.

With the exception of the superb Bradfield productions, Greek plays on a large scale have been confined to the universities. But they could be more adequately given at public schools, for the following reason: the sixth-form schoolboy is a more or less responsible person; but for some inexplicable reason, when that self-same boy becomes a freshman, he is generally distinguished by fatuous irresponsibility. A typical instance will suffice: When *The Clouds* was performed at Cambridge, a youth near the cooking-pot obtained a laugh by dipping his fingers in the stew and going through the agonies of being scalded. Not content with this, he continued to scald his fingers and repeat his grimaces in hopes of repeated laughter. A cat that had once singed his whiskers would have been wiser than to repeat the experiment. A public-school boy would have viewed the matter in that light; not so the young freshman.

I have found that even the blundering devotee of games takes to the Greek play most kindly. If he cannot sing, he can master the restrained gestures that classical "dancing" implies. The best dancers, in my experience, were the school athletes.

I know all the stock arguments against Greek plays at the older public schools. They are answered by the

fact that every public school now possesses a musical director of distinction in his profession, and the further fact that admirable performances have been found possible (both from the musical and the classical standpoint) at less antique seats of learning, with less material, and fewer resources.

XXVII

CONCERNING REVOLUTIONARY SONGS

During recent years, at election times, we became accustomed to reading in the daily press of how Liberal and Conservative meetings were "broken up by the singing of *The Red Flag*." As I never attend political meetings I remained in complete ignorance of both words and tune until 1922. I was naturally curious to know what were the nature and properties of a hymn which appeared to function less as a battle-cry than as an instrument for breaking up "capitalist" meetings. When at last I had run it to earth, I found the tune to be nothing more than our old friend *Maryland, my Maryland*—a soothing, sentimental and commonplace German ditty, eventually adapted in America to highly patriotic words. Since patriotism is as much anathema to the revolutionist as is capitalism, this wedding of revolutionary words to a patriotic tune gave one food for surprise. I have hunted out other revolutionary songs which are being sung to-day, and find them both interesting and illuminating, though not, I fancy, in the way their authors intended.

Belonging to no political party and therefore devoid of political bias, I can claim to have approached these songs in at least an attitude of detachment. My concern is not with their politics. I speak of them purely from the musical and literary point of view.

As a plain musician, I hope I do not misrepresent my Socialist friends if I say that they claim to bring in a new era of new ideas, in contrast with the effete conventions of "the capitalist era." The "capitalistic" world is played out—bankrupt alike of intellect and initiative. To this effete world comes the Socialist, to substitute liberty for slavery, brotherhood for tyranny, and brains for the intellectual sloth begotten of idleness and luxury. That being so, the musician naturally looks to find this fresh and vigorous intellect at work in the songs produced by emancipated minds. Here we may reasonably expect to find the high art that always goes with high ideals. Here

we may reasonably expect to find music that will put to the blush the feeble National Anthems of monarchy and capitalism. Here we may reasonably expect something better than Haydn and Mozart, for both were lackeys (the one of a Grand Duke and the other of an Archbishop), and according to the Socialists (again I hope I do not misrepresent them) no man can be a lackey without acquiring the soul of a lackey.

The French Revolution produced Rouget de Lisle and his electrifying *Marseillaise* and Becourt (the humble side-drum player) with his *Ça ira*—ferocious, if you like, as to the words :

> "Ah ! ça ira, ça ira, ça ira,
> Les aristocrats à la lanterne ;
> Ah ! ça ira, ça ira, ça ira,
> Les aristocrats on les pendra "—

but at any rate a work of art as to its music.

Whatever we may think privately about Luther's revolt, it produced *Christ ist erstanden* and *Ein' feste Burg*, two noble tunes that will live through all the ages.

The English revolution of 1688 had *Lillibulero*, a jolly tune. The Italian revolt of 1870 likewise produced a most singable piece of music.

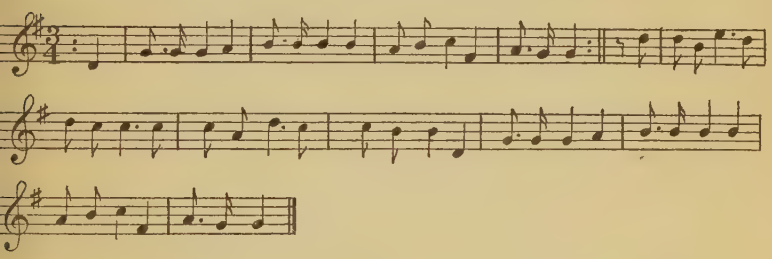
Whether we like or dislike any of these tunes, we at least recognise them as the *original productions* of their authors. Whether we admire or despise the intellect of these authors, we cannot deny to them the title of creators, as opposed to adaptors or copyists. We may dislike their ideas, but those ideas were at least their own, and not those of other people.

How does *The Red Flag* stand in comparison with any of the tunes I have mentioned ? As a mere melody it is a passable expression of patriotic *Heimweh*, but its annexation for revolutionary purposes argues a certain bankruptcy of ideas in its joint authors. On its literary side, this bankruptcy is even more evident. We can hardly

call the words of the *Marseillaise* literary, any more than we can apply that term to the doggerel of *Lillibulero*; but the *Marseillaise* was inspiriting, and *Lillibulero* was full of biting sarcasm. Compare either of them with the Wardour-street rhodomontade of *The Red Flag*:

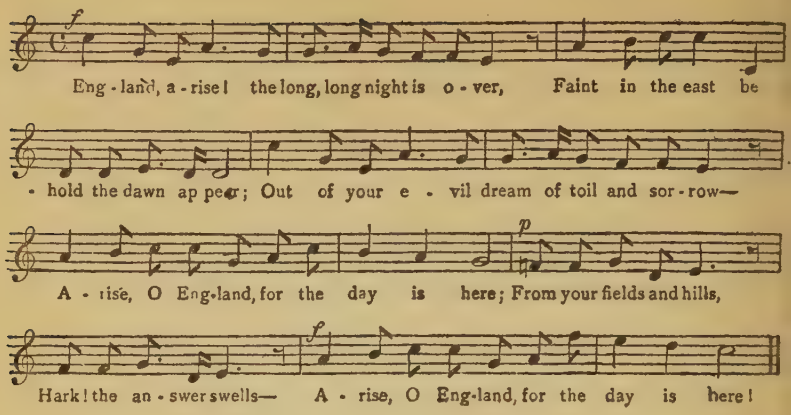
> "Look round: the Frenchman loves its blaze;
> The sturdy German chants its praise;
> In Moscow's vaults its hymns are sung;
> Chicago swells the surging throng."

So much for the words; now for the tune:

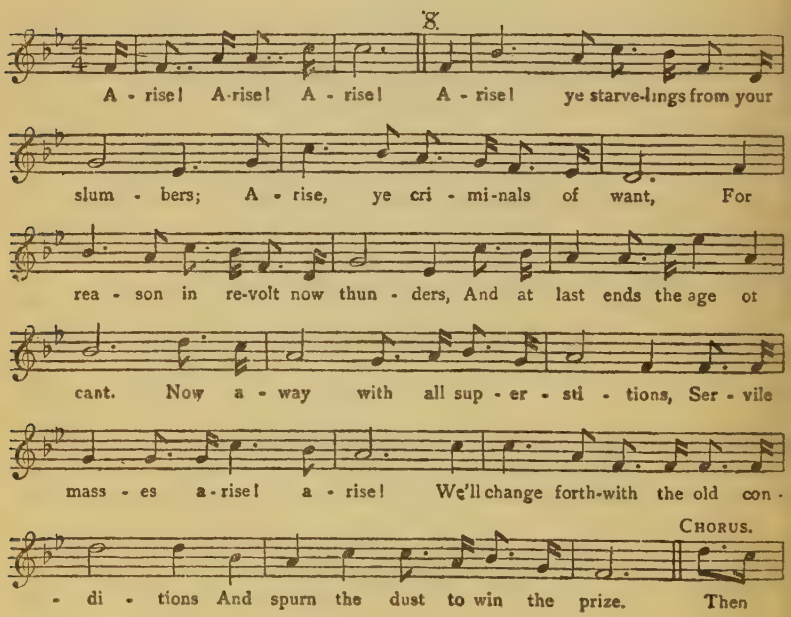


Turning to other songs which (unlike *The Red Flag*) are original, and not adapted, one experiences the same sense of disappointment. The idea of vigour is nearly always expressed by the feeble device of arpeggios on the Common Chord. Doh, Me, Soh, Doh, is certainly a strong combination of notes, but that musical fact has long been recognised in the capitalistic era, and one would naturally expect the bringers of new ideas to give us something a little more original. I may have been unfortunate in my search, but, from the musical point of view, all the rest of the revolutionary songs which I have managed to secure are—both as to words and music—of the feeble music-hall order which one sees in print each week in the "capitalistic" Sunday papers.

The solitary exception is *England, Arise*, words and music by Edward Carpenter, in which the author demonstrates his ability as a poet and his ineptitude as a musician.



The famous "International" had best be left to tell its own story.



com-rades, come ral - ly, And the last fight let us face. The In - ter - na - tion -

- al____ U - nites the hu - man race. Then com - rades, come ral - ly, And the

D.S.

last fight let us face The In - ter - na - tion - al U - nites the hu - man race.

From Mrs. Snowden's book *Through Bolshevik Russia* I have copied the *Song of the Martyrs*. It promises well in the first few bars, but the feeble sequence in the middle section brings the whole thing down to fourth-rate level.

Lente pp

p

f

mf

pp

As I have already said, I have nothing to do with the politics which inspire these songs. I merely judge them as works of art; for the simplest and humblest song can be a true work of art if it is sincere. I do not even question

the *political* sincerity of the songs, but anything in the shape of artistic sincerity is conspicuous by its absence. If revolutionary movements are to have songs which shall fire the imagination and stir the blood, that purpose will not be served by tunes which never rise above the intellectual banality of the music-hall ditty or the Sankey-and-Moody hymn.

Up to this point my remarks have been in the nature of a *précis* of something which I printed in March 1922, at which time I had never heard any adverse criticism of *The Red Flag* (either as to its music or its words) on the part of Labour or Socialism. I should probably not have reprinted them here, but for an illuminating and not unhumorous sequel.

In 1924 Mr. Bernard Shaw came along with a speech in which he damned the *tune* of *The Red Flag* as a whining ditty, worthy only to rank as "the funeral march of a fried eel," and later Mr. Ramsay MacDonald also made a speech in which he damned the *words* of the same unfortunate "hymn."

This change of front on the part of Socialist intelligentsia is not without its significance. Modesty forbids my inquiring whether I converted Mr. Shaw, or Mr. Shaw converted Mr. MacDonald, or whether the whole affair was merely another coincidence of great minds. Suffice it to say that after Mr. MacDonald's speech, the *Daily Herald* entered the lists, and a lively correspondence ensued, which eventually brought into the fray none other than Mr. Jim Connell, the author of the words. Then the real fun commenced.

Mr. Connell (who hotly resented Mr. MacDonald's criticism) allowed himself to be drawn by a representative of the *Morning Post*, and from the interview we learnt that Mr. Connell wrote *The Red Flag* thirty years ago, and that the ex-Premier's criticism of it showed him to be "utterly devoid of either literary or musical appreciation." Mr. Connell added: "I have known him for thirty years, and

never yet had any proof that he had the slightest real appreciation of Robert Burns"—a statement that must have made Caledonia feel even more stern and wild than usual.

But Mr. Connell's real point, on which he laid the greatest stress, was that practically all criticism (save Mr. MacDonald's) had been levelled at the tune of *The Red Flag*; that he did not write the tune; and finally, that the tune to which he did set the words was not the dolorous ditty to which those words are now sung. But let Mr. Connell (through his interviewer) tell his own story:

The present tune is known as *Maryland*, and the tune for which the words were written is *The White Cockade*. The latter was originally the battle-song of the Jacobites and later permeated Ireland. "I heard it on the day I was born," said Mr. Connell, "and on nearly every day after. It was running through my head when I wrote the words for *The Red Flag*, and the lines were carefully planned to fit both the metre and the spirit of the old Jacobite air." Fate and the publisher decided, however, that *Maryland* should convey the epic to the multitude.

Mr. Connell was nearly broken-hearted, and even thirty years after, the sins of the publisher are again being visited on the author. The present tune started life as a Roman Catholic hymn; the Reformation ruled it out of court as it were for a time; but the German peasantry, for some obscure reason, decided that it was too good to lose, turned it into a folk-song, and called it the *Tannenbaum*.

During the American Civil War one of the Federal troops raised his voice in song one night, on the banks of the Potomac. For some inexplicable reason both armies joined in the chorus, and ever since the tune has been known as *Maryland*. According to Mr. Connell, the main trouble about *The Red Flag* is that words written for a battle-song have become associated with a hymn, which, to use his own words, "was originally written to call sinners to repentance by fear." *The White Cockade*, as he knew it, was admirably suited both for the words and the message of the Socialist anthem, but, thanks to the effort of "music-hall baboons,

who introduced semi-quavers all over the place," it is now little better than a jig.

The Red Flag has been criticised freely ever since it was adopted as a slogan of comradeship, but Mr. Connell asserts that Mr. MacDonald is the only man who has ever had the temerity to belittle the words. Some years ago he is reported to have said that it had not a good line in it. Even Mr. Bernard Shaw admitted to the author that he did not mind the words. It is suggested that a new song shall be written; but in view of the fact that it seems to be the tune that is objected to, Mr. Connell is in favour of reviving the old *White Cockade* and keeping his verses. "But," he added pointedly, "I am not a publisher."

So here we have Mr. Connell raising some distinctly musical points, which justify me in introducing this lengthy newspaper quotation and entitle us all to examine his credentials as a musical historian.

One is entitled to ask on what grounds he describes a sentimental *modern* ditty as having "started life many hundreds of years ago as a Roman Catholic hymn." Dreves is the recognised authority on Roman Catholic hymns from medieval times onwards; but in the whole of his twenty-two volumes I fail to find any trace of this particular one. On what authority, then, does Mr. Connell father it upon the poor Papists?

Historical students will doubtless smile at the idea of the Reformation ruling out a non-existent hymn, and music-students will doubtless chuckle at the idea of a peasantry consciously deciding that a hymn must henceforth become a folk-song. That is not the way a folk-song is generated.

But the really comical thing—which blows Mr. Connell's critical exegesis into smithereens—is this: the tune is frankly in the major scale, and at the (medieval) date of its supposed composition the major and minor scales had not even come into existence.

Apart from the flavour of the nineteenth century (or at earliest the eighteenth) which the music exudes in every bar, one might point out that the melody contains an

inversion of the "tritone fourth," an interval which the medieval folk held in such horror that they burst into rhyme about it:

> "Mi contra Fa
> Diabolus est in musica."

In other words, they called this abhorred interval "the very devil in music."

Mr. Bernard Shaw may bestow as many benedictions on the words as he chooses, but on Mr. Connell's own showing the tune stands condemned on every count.

It is a sloppy, sentimental tune, and for the sake of their own self-respect the sooner Socialists take Mr. Connell's advice and get back to *The White Cockade* the better. For *The White Cockade* is a rattling good tune.

XXVIII

MUSIC-HALL SONGS

BEFORE the music-hall became the Variety Theatre, song and dance were its chief attractions. The music-hall song conformed to a very definite type—a type that captured the popular taste, however much cultured folk might pour their scorn upon it. The musician might regard it as something outside the pale of serious music, but it was whistled in every street and played on every barrel-organ. It had an unchallenged vogue for over three decades (through the 'seventies, 'eighties and 'nineties, well into the nineteen hundreds), so it cannot be dismissed as negligible.

Now that its palmy days are over and its singers are becoming memories of the past, I am sometimes asked by the young generation whether there are music-hall songs of the "good old sort" which are classics in the sense that they will live pretty well for ever.

I am sometimes asked for an opinion on these songs by people who regard me as a "professional expert" upon good music—and even accuse me (as one did the other day) of taking pleasure in singing myself such songs as those old ones with which Gus Elen and Dan Leno used to delight London. Do I as a musical technician admire those songs, they ask, and believe in them?

A certain defendant, against whom it was alleged that his dog had bitten a neighbour, put up the double defence—"First, I haven't got a dog. Secondly, you must have worried him or he wouldn't have bitten you." I can only reply in a similar strain to the pertinent inquiry whether I have ever taken pleasure in singing those old songs, that, first, I haven't got a voice; and, secondly, if I do sing with pleasure the songs of Elen and Leno, it must be because my friends have worried me into that flagrancy.

I should hesitate to describe any music-hall song as a classic, either in the accepted sense of that term or in the sense that it would be likely to "live for ever." Even the accepted classics don't always do that! But I do say

that the old music-hall song cannot be ignored by the serious student of British music.

Psychologically, it is an instructive commentary on our national tastes and habits and our peculiar national mentality during the early and middle Victorian periods. Musically it is even more instructive.

At that time, when literature and science were flourishing and even the plastic arts were showing signs of life, music in England had reached its nadir. Our people no longer sang their folk-songs; our composers were negligible; our opera was a procession of petulant prima donnas of both sexes, and in the matter of ensemble was disgraceful; our concerts, with few exceptions, were pretentious performances of second-rate foreign music. The "serious" and smug middle classes had their oratorio—dull, staid and respectable. That was all that "cultured" England had in the way of music.

But the so-called "uncultured" masses still retained the primitive instinct for song. They still reacted (again from sheer primitive instinct) to the two prime factors in music—melody and rhythm.

Outside the pale of "cultured" music, they took to making their own songs. Their authors were innocent of literature; their composers were guiltless of musicianship. But the composers of the songs—in their choruses at least—had facility in that one-dimensional form of music which we call melody; and above all they had a genius for that unsophisticated form of rhythm which is best described as "lilt"—a form to which the populace can always be relied upon to react instantaneously.

The words of the songs were usually banal, but the topics they treated furnish an illuminating index of the social life and moral code of the period, to say nothing of the cheery Cockney humour which everywhere keeps peeping through it all. The humour was generally crude, and sometimes coarse; but crudity and coarseness are healthier than suggestiveness.

The tunes were frequently obvious to the point of dullness, yet they were nearly always redeemed by a rollicking chorus with an infectious lilt. The accompaniments (until the arrival of artists like Vesta Tilley) were of the bald, "vamping" type.

But, in spite of these defects, I would rather any day hear *Champagne Charlie* or *Hi-tiddley-hi-ti*, or *They're all very fine and large*, than the sloppy sentiment of Tosti's *Good-bye*, or the fustian of Stephen Adams's *Midshipmite*, or any other cerebrations of the Victorian drawing-room composer.

There is more healthy fun in *It's a grite big shime*, or *At Trinity Church I met my doom*, than in any of the strictly proper "humorous" songs (of *No, Sir* and *The Miller and the Maid* type) which arch young Victorian ladies would sing coyly at parish gatherings when the curate was present.

The true significance of the music-hall song lies in the fact that it was the creation of "the people" during a period when they were suffering from musical starvation; when "cultured" music was like its patrons, smug, self-satisfied, complacent and inept. "The people" had no use for smugness or complacency; they were unaffected by middle-class conventions either in music or anything else.

But they had an inherent passion for song, they had an inherent instinct for melody and rhythm, and the music-hall ditty was their expression of both.

I do not know that one can admire them all or (as my friends put it) believe in them in the sense in which one admires or believes in a Beethoven symphony. But the songs are at least human documents, and as such of profound interest.

XXIX

THE PASSING OF THE MUSIC-HALL

It seems only the other day that we were extolling the music-hall as the one place where (amid much pretence elsewhere) one could really find musical efficiency. But Sir Alfred Butt startled us one morning by saying that the day of "the halls" was over, and that nine of the London ones were about to close down. He blamed the exorbitant salaries demanded by "stars." That may be the immediate cause, but the real cause is the managers themselves.

In the early days of the Palace Theatre, when Charles Morton was lifting the music-hall out of the old ruts and making it a charming institution, he was always on the look-out for new talent. He held "auditions" (hateful word) every Monday, and however obscure the performer who came along, if he had an original "turn" to offer, he received an engagement. In that way The Palace really became a "variety" theatre.

The managers of rival halls were less inclined to copy his industry than to capture such turns as proved successful. Hence any successful "Palace turn" was sure of a queue of managers or agents outbidding each other to secure it. For popular favourites, long contracts and inflated salaries became the rule. The rank and file (no matter how good their turns might be) were left to struggle along as best they might. No wonder, then, if the Stars—assured of eternal contracts at colossal salaries—rested on their laurels, introduced no new ideas into their turns, and gave us the same fare year in and year out. Then truly did the "variety theatres" belie their name. They became theatres without any variety whatever.

The war has changed all that. Youth has turned to manhood, and the lad who made an idol of Mr. This or Mme That gets a little "fed up" to-day when he drops into "the halls" and finds them still "handing out the old gags" that he once thought so funny or so clever.

It was not so with the old-time stars. Dan Leno, when

he finished with the inevitable Drury Lane pantomime, always came back to the halls with an entirely new repertoire. Vesta Tilley always had something fresh, and if she repeated some of her old successes as encores it was only because her audience clamoured for repetitions of songs so superbly sung and so superbly orchestrated.

One also remembers the old days at The Palace after Herman Finck was set in the conductor's chair—a fine conductor with a crack orchestra. Those were the times when Henry Wood's Promenade Concerts were the only ones where one could listen to fine music in human fashion. A concerto elsewhere had to be a sort of pontifical ceremony for the elect. But at The Palace one could listen (with a pipe in one's mouth) to a Schumann concerto or a Tchaikovsky selection magnificently played, enjoy the music, and not feel a highbrow. The popular verdict on Finck's *Melodious Memories* has rather overshadowed the more serious work he then did. But I always remember what one of our first British composers said to me concerning them: "Any fool could string a few old tunes together; but when Finck does the trick, he makes us feel that in the matter of big orchestration he could put a few of us in his pocket."

Those times are passing. Managerial stupidity—concerned entirely with snapping up Stars—failed to feel the pulse of the public; failed to see how much these serious musical turns appealed to audiences. Now that such turns are disappearing and the public is so "fed up with the old gags" of the Stars that they stay away from the halls, managers and agents are calling heaven to witness their sorry plight. Well, they have themselves and not the overpaid Stars to thank. A little less commercialism and a little more of the artistic insight of old Charles Morton would have saved them. They lacked that insight, and they are now reaping their reward.

XXX

BOGEYS

Following up my remarks on the elimination of music from the national life and its confinement to a class called "musical," I wonder how many people realise the actual extent of the divorce of music and the sister arts.

It is all very well to point to the exceptional musical activities in our midst, to show how British music has gone ahead in this generation by leaps and bounds, to point to the activity of young British composers, to remark on the fine standard of British orchestral playing, to call attention to the increasing number of British virtuosos. But when all is said and done, we have only to step out of the charmed circle of music and mix with "the people" to realise that all the activities of which we are so justly proud only affect a part of the nation. The average British citizen who reacts to every new phase of literature is left comparatively untouched by new phases of music. He is still under the spell of the old traditions. Before you can get *en rapport* with him on the subject of music there is no end of traditional lumber to be cleared away. He still uses terminology that has become obsolete. He is still as scared as ever by names, when the things they signified have either disappeared or entirely altered in significance.

The "gift" legend—to which I referred in previous chapters—is still going strong, and more or less effectively bars the way to any *rapprochement* between music and the average citizen. John Citizen is still overawed by labels. The most terrifying of these is the word "classical." John has a good ear; he likes beautiful sounds; he really does wish to know more about music. But between him and the music he longs for stands the grim figure of the musical practitioner of the Victorian era. True, the Victorian practitioner has been gathered to his fathers, but his unquiet ghost still haunts the scene, and is more terrifying to honest John than a flesh-and-blood professor.

This Victorian spook tells John that there are two kinds

of music, classical and otherwise, and that it is the duty of every music-lover to affect classical music, or he is no real lover of music.

In theory this principle is so sound that no one would wish to quarrel with it. But, unfortunately for John, he has accepted the spook's definition of what is and is not classical.

The spook has fastened on a certain period (of the eighteenth century) and a certain country (Germany) and christened the musical product of that time and country "classical." Every other kind of music falls outside the category. John may like these other types of music, but is afraid to say so, because they are not "classical."

Then there is the other type of Britisher, who is more or less indifferent to professional music, but who is quite capable of reacting to music when it is thrown his way.

He hears the type of music labelled "classical" and doesn't like it. He hears other music of the popular sort, and does like it. He is not afraid to say that he likes it, nor is he afraid to say that he has "no use for your classical music"—small blame to him.

Between the loyal John Citizen, who conceals his lack of admiration for the "classics," and his rebel brother citizen, who proclaims his distaste from the housetops, there is really little difference. They are both right, and the ghost of the Victorian professor is wrong, only no one has told them so yet.

The Victorian professor knew no music before Haydn and Mozart; he could not understand any music later than Beethoven. So he labelled as "the classics" only the music of which he had any knowledge. Wagner was to him a charlatan and Brahms a dangerous person. (The fact that Wagner and Brahms are classics with the professor of to-day is beside the point. John Citizen cowers before the spook professor, and hasn't yet come in contact with the one of flesh and blood.)

If anyone doubts the extent to which the old traditions

hold the field, let him get in touch with a member of that vast company called "listeners-in." He will find a timid dread of anything "classical" and an eager interest in anything else.

The whole ridiculous situation has been created by the old stereotyped vogue for the pianoforte. As little children we were confined to the "classical" label. We learnt Mozart and Beethoven, it is true, but we also had the Stiebelts, Kuhlaus, Kalkbrenners, and the rest of the German crowd who poured out imitations. We learnt nothing but formal music, (who does not remember the awful "sonatinas" under which we suffered at school?), none that stirred the imagination. We learnt to hate formalism, and thought we were hating the classics, whereas we were only hating something that had received a false label. We were, in short, frightened by a bogey.

Modern music teachers are bringing up a generation that knows nothing of these silly labels. But the adult citizen is still under the spell of the "classical" tradition. I doubt if we shall be able to release him, unless it is by constant pegging away at the foundations of his belief.

At present, however, he will listen to any rubbish on the wireless rather than be brought into contact with what he considers "classical." If he could be got to listen to a jolly bit of Mozart or Bach without knowing the name of the composer, he would immediately react to it. But just because a lot of dry German music of the nineteenth century was labelled "classical," he shrinks from contact with everything that is really classical.

In similar circumstances the average citizen has never learnt the joy that might be his if he understood the structure of the music which appealed to him. He has been so long terrified by such words as "harmony" and "counterpoint" that he has come to regard the things they represent as something outside the ken of such mortals as have not the "gift" of music, whereas harmony and counterpoint can be made the jolliest of indoor games

with the average school child. The spook professor labelled them as the " higher branches " of music, whereas they are only the rudiments—again frightening us with bogeys and scarecrows.

The younger generation is learning a rational appreciation of music simply because it is not hag-ridden with bogeys. But I fear the case of John Citizen is hopeless.

Experiences with wireless have shown me how abject a slave he is to old superstitions. We shall have to wait for the new generation before the old bogeys are laid to rest, I fear.

XXXI

THE DIVORCE OF MUSIC AND LETTERS

THE Gibbons ter-centenary was responsible for much Gibbons lore in the press, and "arising out of that question" —as we say in Parliament—several pertinent reflections present themselves. The one which concerns me here, however, is the different position of English music in Gibbons's century and our own. Elizabethan artists, statesmen, scholars and men of letters held musicians as their peers. Victorian (and even George the Fifthian) scholars and men of letters are wont to hold music cheap, and musicians in something of contempt. This attitude is less militant than formerly, but still we have Lord Birkenhead (a great lawyer) offering £50 to be excused from attending a concert.

Messrs. Belloc and Chesterton (great men of letters) are popularly (and I trust erroneously) supposed to have no use for music or musicians (especially the latter). Finally we have Dean Inge (a great scholar and ecclesiastic) saying:

"I DETEST MUSIC."

And everyone laughed to see such sport as a witty and scholarly Dean dismissing an art he had failed to grasp with such epigrammatic brevity.

Now, if a bandy-legged Dean were to detest straight legs he wouldn't say so. He would be too conscious of his own infirmity to call attention to it in that way.

If a colour-blind Dean were to say, "I detest pictures," we should all laugh—*at him.* But when a tone-deaf Dean says, "I detest music," we all laugh—*at the musician!* There seems to be a catch in this somewhere.

If the optical infirmity of colour-blindness disqualifies its victim as an art critic, why should the aural infirmity of tone-deafness entitle its victim to function as a musical critic; colour-blindness (in other words) being something to be sorry for, but tone-deafness being something to be proud of?

If Lord Dundreary were still alive, this problem would

have been included in his list of those "things that no fellah can understand."

But I think I can understand. True, Lord Birkenhead's great predecessor on the Woolsack (Francis, Lord Verulam) held his musical contemporaries in high honour. Messrs. Belloc and Chesterton's brethren of the pen (Shakespeare, Marlowe and Ben Jonson) held their musical contemporaries in equal esteem. Dr. Inge's great predecessor at St. Paul's (Dean Colet) is not reported as having passed contemptuous remarks on music. And that is very much to the point.

In Elizabethan times music took its place as an integral part of the intellectual life of the nation. No one was considered to have received the education of a gentleman who could not pick up a part-book and "bear his part in a madrigal"—in other words, read a piece of music at first sight. (I should love to hear the present-day successors of Francis Bacon and Dean Colet singing *The Silver Swan* at either first or umpteenth sight.)

If Elizabethan scholars, lawyers, deans and men of letters held music in equal esteem with art and literature, how is it that scholars (university dons in particular) in later times considered music (proficiency in which was the hall-mark of a gentleman in Elizabethan times) as "no occupation for scholars and gentlemen"? I am aware that Oxford and Cambridge have modified this attitude of late years, and that Lord Birkenhead and Dean Inge are the rather pathetic survivals of it. But that does not bring us any nearer the solution of the question, why music and letters, so happily married in Elizabethan times, have later not only been divorced, but had their decree nisi made absolute. How did the rift in their domestic lute first come about?

Ever since Charles II brought over continental musicians and discouraged English music, we have been under the domination of the foreigner. Handel's vogue in the eighteenth century was the beginning of our subservience

to the Germans. The rise of opera in the same century brought its influx of Italians, and so on, until no music worth mentioning was produced in this country save by foreigners. The English musician was reduced to picking up the crumbs that fell from the alien's table, and developed into a mere teacher and a drudge. His musical attainments were second-rate. He was usually an organist who taught —sometimes well, sometimes badly—all other branches of music indiscriminately. He had little to do with the higher walks of his art; like all other general practitioners, he maintained a general level of mediocrity. Foreigners came over and were lionised and fêted, and departed with the fortunes they had amassed, but the English musical practitioner remained, a being apart, drudging and toiling for a livelihood. Music consequently drifted into the hands of a class divorced from the intellectual life of the nation.

So grew up the legend that music was a thing apart—that it belonged to a particular class, and that not a very intellectual one. The pretensions of musical practitioners helped on the delusion. Music came to be regarded as a "gift" granted to the few and denied to the many. If amateurs took an ordinary interest in music they were spoken of as "musical"; if they took an intelligent interest they were "very musical." No one ever heard of the average citizen with a corresponding love of books being called "literary" or "very literary" on the strength of it, for the simple reason that appreciation of books is within the reach of everybody.

The reason these silly terms, "musical," "very musical" or "quite a musician" are applied to music-lovers, and the term "quite a literary man" is not applied to the book-lover, is to be found in the "gift" legend in music.

The point I wish to make is, that so far from the capacity to understand music being a "gift," it is common to more people than is the capacity to appreciate books. But just because pedagogues and university dons agreed to

depreciate music as an unintellectual pursuit, and musical practitioners combined to boost it as a "gift," the art has ceased to be part of the intellectual equipment of the average citizen. Poor John Citizen has been told that it is outside his orbit, and has believed what he was told.

XXXII

TRUSTEESHIP IN ART

MAN is a gregarious animal.

Having uttered this solemn platitude, there is nothing left but to go back to it again and say that—though platitudinous—the statement is so far true that it accounts for all sorts of tendencies with which we do not usually connect it.

Psychologists have familiarised us with the blessed word "herd-instinct," which in its exaggerated form becomes "mob-hysteria." How far the tendencies implied by these terms enter into music we are only now beginning to realise.

Psycho-analysis happens to be a fashionable cult just now, and wise people are naturally a little suspicious of the jargon which its devotees reel off so glibly concerning it. But behind all these silly devotees who "talk the patter" of "the new psychology," there is a solid body of qualified medical men who do deal with realities, and whose research cannot be ignored.

When they tell us that (man being *necessarily* gregarious) society must be greater than the individual, and that the next generation is of more importance than this generation, we know that these biological truths have an intimate bearing on our sociological outlook. When they tell us that normal social influences work upon the race from above downwards, we know that deleterious ones are those in which "mob-hysteria" works its influence from below upwards, and that retrogression must take place where the higher intellects fail in providing "the vision" and passing it downwards.

One of our ablest psychologists makes a happy division of society into the *Prophets* who see the vision, and the *Priests* (in the unecclesiastical sense of course) who conserve the traditions. He deals with the just balance which must be preserved between these necessary but conflicting elements of society. If the fear of offending the herd, or of being ignored by the herd, is deep-seated in

every individual, that purely animal instinct can only become valuable sociologically when it is idealised. "In our relations to society, the herd-instinct is, of course, a primary instinct of the animal type. All instincts that exist in the animal work to an *end*. All motives which are restricted to the human race work to an *ideal*, and it is only when we take hold of this herd-instinct, and transform it into the Herd Ideal, that we really get a step farther forward. It is when we recognise that our potentialities in every direction—spiritual, mental, physical, artistic—are *held in trust for the herd*, that we grasp this ideal, and it is only then that we have taken hold of the instinct and turned it into a bit of practical philosophy."

If I quote Dr. Crichton-Millar at such length it is because two aspects of the herd-instinct are rather insistent in music just now. In jazz we have a stark case of mob-hysteria. We don't like to admit the fact; we don't like to say that it is exercising a wider influence than the mere requirements of dancing demand; we are rather fond of patting it on the back as a sort of revolt from formalism and dullness. But when we have thus "rationalised," and shoved it down into our "subconscious" (forgive the popular jargon), it nevertheless remains as an influence in music which is working from the unintellectual "below upwards," and not from the intellectual "above downwards." It is therefore a retrogression. Its popularity has no artistic significance. "Everybody's doing it" is a pernicious argument in artistic matters. Numbers—in matters of art—do not constitute authority. Quality, not quantity, is the touchstone.

The other—and rather more serious matter—is that of our revived British school of music. For the first time since the sixteenth century Britain is in the forefront of the world's music. We have our Prophets who see the vision; we (happily) have our Priests who conserve the traditions. So far everything has worked well. The very hardness of the fight which the young visionaries had

to put up (against the "Old Guard" who "conserved the traditions") has toughened their fibre and consolidated their convictions. They are now in smooth water.

All will be well if they realise that the point they have reached is not a haven of peace, but a new danger-zone. They—the Prophets—are even now creating *their* new hierarchy of followers who will conserve their traditions, and against whom a yet newer generation of Prophets will soon be at hand to wage war. Already we see some of the minor Prophets forsaking the following of visions for the safer rôle of the Priesthood which conserves the traditions. But it is little use "writing fifths like Vaughan Williams" if you have not the Vaughan Williams vision.

There is a disquieting amount of "writing like Vaughan Williams" abroad just now. The herd-instinct for being in the fashion is inciting too many young people to join the comfortable ranks of the Priesthood instead of aspiring to the thorny crown of the Prophet; imitating where they might create, forgetful that what is inspiration in the Prophet of music becomes mere mannerism in the Priesthood of the art.

It will be instructive to watch how the herd-instinct works out in these two cases—the one of jazz mob-hysteria working its evil way from below upwards, and the other of the new British school where the higher intellects have provided the vision and passed it downwards.

Only by the saving sense of trusteeship can the former be destroyed and the latter conserved in its primitive vitality.

XXXIII

CONSECUTIVE FIFTHS

THIS book being written for the music-lover and not for the professional musician, it may reasonably be asked why I choose a subject hitherto regarded as belonging entirely to the technical side of the art. I do so at this particular time because—so it seems to me—the musical amateur has too long been overawed by terrifying technical terms with which the academic or the would-be-learned seek to frighten him into a proper state of subjection.

The musical amateur is usually modest, and willing to learn from "authority." His opponent is usually assertive, and poses as the representative of authority. The amateur is usually silenced by the quotation of a "rule." It never occurs to him to question the source or the authority of the quoted rule. His very reverence for the art prevents him from questioning anything concerning its technique. He realises that the art is eternal, but seldom seems to know that—since music is a *living* art—its technique is constantly changing. Rules become out of date with new conditions. Progressions (for example) that are intolerable on the pianoforte may prove effective with voices and ravishing with strings. The musician (just because he *is* a musician) knows when any particular rule should be applied and when its application would be ineffective. The pedant who makes his living by music is devoid of this subtle sense, and consequently falls back on the mechanical application of rigid rules.

For the comfort of the amateur, therefore, it is well to say that the question is less one of law and order *versus* rebellion than the clash of two types of mentality as opposite as the poles. The composer is concerned with the expression of his artistic conceptions; the pedant is only concerned with the extent to which such conceptions conform to his "rules."

The story has been the same all down the centuries. The composer is always seeking new paths and new out-

lets. The pedant of his generation makes an outcry about this rebellion against law, order and authority. But we find the pedant of the next generation reducing to "rules" the same "rebellious" composer's discoveries. The pedants of Beethoven's generation denounced him as a dangerous person for the student to imitate. The pedants of to-day have written analyses of his sonatas, as examples to be followed.

In similar fashion consecutive fifths were forbidden in medieval times because they were too sweet, sensuous and cloying. They were forbidden in the nineteenth century because they were too raw and crude. The composer of to-day accepts or rejects them according to one rule, and one rule only: "Do they sound well?"

One might suppose that the rule forbidding consecutive fifths is thereby abolished. Nothing of the kind. This is not the place to explain the technical reasons why "fifths" are sometimes effective, though usually the reverse. It is sufficient to say that the most casual student of music cannot fail to see the difference between fifths written deliberately by a master of his craft *who knows his rules* and those which drift into the work of the tyro who has not skill enough to keep them out. The tyro breaks rules because he has not mastered them properly. The musician breaks them to suit his purpose, because he knows them from A to Z, and has made them thereby (in the words of Beethoven) his very humble servants.

The wisest words in this connexion come from Sir Charles Stanford, in his book on *Composition*: "First learn your rules, and then forget all about them."

Forgetting all about them does not, of course, mean disregarding them. A boy learns rules of grammar at school; he never thinks of them when he becomes a famous author. He has "forgotten" all about them in the sense that Sir Charles Stanford uses the word. It is only the unskilled writer who uses pedantic grammar. It is no doubt all according to rule, and

just because of his obsession regarding rules it is tiresome and stilted.

This clash between the mentality of the artist and the mentality of the pedant has created two other equally opposite types, having only one thing in common—an insufficient knowledge of music. The one finds rules irksome, and rebels against all rule. The other assumes a knowledge of music which he is far from possessing, and quotes rules with facility.

It is hard to say which type is the more tiresome. The former is usually found out first. He has only to go on composing long enough, to demonstrate that rebellion against authority is no proof of originality, and that eccentricity cannot for long conceal poverty of thought. The second type, however, has usually a longer run for his money. As a composer he may be relied on to play for safety. He never takes any long flights. He can be relied on to write dull hymn-tunes and anthems (he flourishes best in an ecclesiastical environment) that break no rule, and the zeal with which he hunts for "fifths" in the work of others is most praiseworthy. The Germans have long had a term of derision for him: *Quintenjaeger.*

The theory that hunting for "fifths" shows learning and that the judicious use of fifths shows less learning has been so thoroughly exposed by writers of repute that we should wonder at anyone seriously advancing it nowadays, but for the fact that every now and then one meets a stray specimen of *Quintenjaeger* who will gleefully tell you that this or that composer is really not up to much, since he has found CONSECUTIVE FIFTHS in his latest work.

One can only recommend to these stray survivals of a past century that they read chapter xi of Dr. H. J. Watts's *The Foundation of Music*; chapter v of R. O. Morris's *Contrapuntal Technique*; Dr. Ralph Dunstan's *Modal Counterpoint*; Stanford's *Musical Composition*; and Dr. Shinn's (second) article on *Hidden Fifths and Octaves* in the 1906 edition of *Grove's Dictionary.*

They might be further advised to study the effect of successive "fifths" in such a master-work as Vaughan Williams's *Mass in G Minor*, for twelve voices.

So, good music-lover, when next you hear a *Quintenjaeger* condemn a piece of music because he has found a brace of fifths in it, don't be alarmed. Just ask yourself: "Do they sound well?" If they do (and a cultivated ear will always supply the answer), you may infer that the composer put them there designedly. If they don't, you may infer with equal certitude that they slipped into his music because he had not sufficient skill to keep them out. That is all that can be said. Any school-child can detect fifths, so there is no special credit in the *Quintenjaeger* being able to do the like.

Believe me, dear musical amateur, if you have a good ear and a cultivated taste, you will find them safer guides than our oracular friend with the long German title.

XXXIV

A QUESTION OF IDIOM

THAT the musical ear can accustom itself to any sound or combination of sounds is a proposition which the last generation of harmony teachers strenuously denied, and which the present generation is willing to accept as an axiom. But the process of acquiring a new harmonic or melodic idiom is not so easy as some would have us suppose. It is a simple enough process for the youthfully receptive mind to assimilate as a matter of course chords and progressions which are nothing less than torture to the matured musician, reared on harmonic principles which in their day were sound and logical, but which break down when applied to Debussy or Stravinsky. But once the new idiom is acquired, nothing is easier (especially to the young composer) than to write music in it. The youngsters learn the trick first, and even when they have nothing particular to say, it is easy for them to acquire a reputation as daring and advanced composers with their elders, who are necessarily slower at the uptake, and take longer to learn how easy is the trick once you have learnt it. We see the process going on round about us every day in modern music. We are all (save a negligible few) "moderns" to-day, and if we do not understand the latest modern idiom, we are at pains not to say so.

Side by side with this cultivation of modernism in music, there is now a distinct movement in the direction of the ancient composers. By ancient I mean those composers of the polyphonic period of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, who wrote in the (miscalled "ecclesiastical") Modes, for the simple reason that the major and minor scales had not yet been invented.

It was the fashion with the last generation of musicians to give lip-service to Purcell and Bach; to consider them as "ancient" composers; and to treat the study of any music anterior to theirs as an antiquarian pursuit. The strong, virile music of our early English composers; the many-sided art of the Netherlanders (their contempor-

aries); the polished periods of Palestrina; the tenderly human strains of Vittoria,—all alike were regarded as the immature strivings after a perfection which was only reached in the classical period of the late eighteenth century.

Those ideas are now (thank Heaven) as dead as Queen Anne amongst real musicians, with the result that the polyphonic composers are to-day receiving a greater meed of attention and study than they have hitherto done. From the perfect art of polyphony it is but a short step backwards to the equally perfect art of plainsong, and an immediate consequence of these two studies is the recently revived interest in modal music in general and modal counterpoint in particular.

For the general reader it is necessary to define "counterpoint." Put in its simplest form, it means a composition for voices or instruments in which each part is a distinct melody in itself, with its own individual movement and rhythm. It is the antithesis of the conventional conception of "harmony," which implies a "tune on the top," while the lower parts are confined to forming chords underneath it. This type of music, with its "progressions" of "chords," is to be viewed vertically, as opposed to contrapuntal music, which one naturally looks at horizontally. Chords and their progression are the basis of harmony. They are only incidental to counterpoint. *They are there all the same*, but they result from the skill of the contrapuntist in so combining his melodies that they produce chords at each point of impact. Of course, this explanation is highly untechnical. Much more is implied by the terms "harmony" and "counterpoint" than is here set down, but it will serve. Greater detail would be confusing to the general reader and superfluous for the musical one.

The art of counterpoint has necessarily been practised by every great composer, whether he was ancient and writing in the modes, or modern and writing in keys.

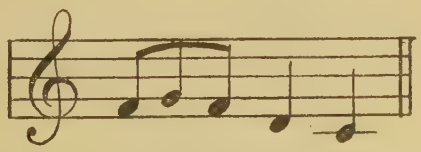
There is nothing very terrifying about all this, nevertheless the musical amateur could always be relied upon to succumb when the musical practitioner overawed him by pronouncing the sacred word COUNTERPOINT, that held suggestion of esoteric mysteries too deep for the lay mind to fathom. What the musical amateur did not know was that the musical practitioner's acquaintance with counterpoint did not extend to the real counterpoint of the old masters, but merely to academic counterpoint.

Now, academic counterpoint—usually called by its professors "strict counterpoint"—is the invention of musical grammarians for examination purposes. They laid down "rules" which had no reference to any musical literature either past or present. A few of these rules no doubt had some show of reason if applied to modes, but none at all when applied to keys. And since examination candidates are confined to keys, the whole ludicrous system has been a by-word amongst musicians in proportion as it became a fetish amongst professors. Unfortunate students were told that by diligently applying themselves to this system of musical arithmetic they would—when they had attained proficiency—be able (by reason of the "discipline" which the study entailed) to write music with greater "freedom" of movement, on the analogy that if you wish to acquire greater suppleness in a limb, tie it up for six months and then you will realise what freedom is when you get loose. Everybody except the grammarian knows that atrophy and not freedom would be the result, just as "strict counterpoint" atrophies the invention of the average student.

The system would have perished long ago but for the vested interests involved. The late craze for examinations created an army of professors who lived either by examining or coaching for examinations. Reform in the examination system meant that they would either have to learn a new set of rules or forgo a lucrative source of income.

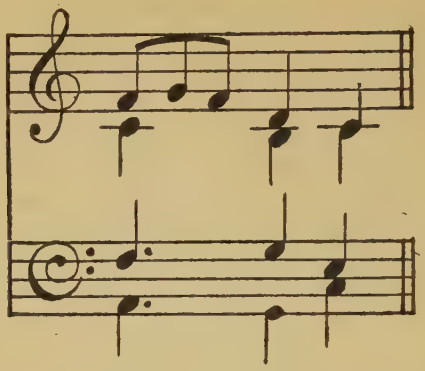
Things are mending, however. The chief opponents of reform used to be the universities, the colleges of music, and examining bodies like the Royal College of Organists. Now it is the more enlightened universities and colleges of music and the R.C.O. that are taking the lead in the reform. Their examinations now require counterpoint that is based on the works of the great composers past and present. Grammar is a necessity in the examination-room, but the musicians who now hold authority at the above-named institutions realise that musical grammar (like every other grammar) should be founded on the literature. A few enlightened professors in certain colleges have been teaching modal counterpoint for many years for the sheer joy of the thing. They are now reaping the reward of seeing the subject included in the curriculum for degrees and diplomas. The trouble, however, is that outside these particular colleges the student could hitherto glean no information on modal counterpoint, owing to the entire absence of any text-books on the subject, until Dr. Ralph Dunstan published his *Diatonic Modal Counterpoint* in 1921.

If I have written at some length on the nature of "examination" counterpoint, it is to emphasise a point which is of prime importance if students are to get a fundamental grasp of modal music. The point that is apt to be missed is that, however correctly one may write in a mode, it is possible to convey no suggestion of modal feeling. Take, for example, one of the commonest melodic figures in Mode I:

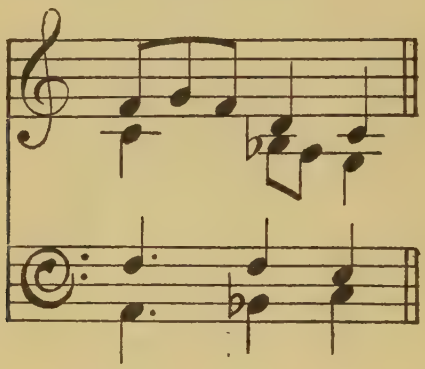


In the following harmonisation, not a single note is used which does not belong absolutely to the mode, and yet the

effect is that of a modulation from the key of F into the key of its modern dominant:



This is quite foreign to modal idiom. The flattening of one's B gives the desired effect thus:



In other words, the correctness *on paper* of a piece of modal writing does not necessarily imply that it will *sound* modal. The modal feeling only comes after careful study and practical experience of the best modal composers.

Let me make this point plainer. It has been my lot to examine many examples of students' modal counterpoint, sent me (chiefly in the form of Masses) with a view to performance by my choir. Most of these compositions have

exhibited a very high standard of contrapuntal technique. The composers have grasped the rules of each Mode, and everything (*on paper*) was "according to the rubrics." But so far as idiom was concerned, nearly all their First Mode compositions gave the feeling of modern *key* of D minor; their Sixth Mode ones the *key* of F; and their Seventh Mode ones either the *key* of G major or C major with the full closes in G. The notes were all right, but the modal idiom was wanting. The mere technique of the modes is rapidly and easily acquired. Modal feeling and modal idiom come but slowly to the mind accustomed to think only in keys. Unless modal counterpoint is to become a fruitless study, it is rather on this second and subtler side that stress should at first be laid. Until a student has acquired the habit of thinking in the modes, his modal writing will invariably suggest the major and minor keys with possibly a few quaint progressions thrown in.

It will be some time, I think, before text-books on modal counterpoint arrive at the same stage of authority that those on ordinary harmony and counterpoint now exhibit. But a good beginning has been made by the book I have mentioned. Amateur enthusiasts in search of (contrapuntal) truth will be delighted with a second work (published in 1923), which, however, demands another chapter.

XXXV

THE DISMAL SCIENCE

In the last chapter I recommended a certain book for perusal. In this one I am going to recommend another.

I am well aware that such a proceeding violates every canon of bookmaking, and that if the practice were allowed to spread, the printing press would become one vast commentary on itself.

But my deviation from strict orthodoxy and correctness of behaviour has at least a reasonable excuse. This book being written for the general reader, any technical discussions would be out of place. But (if I may quote from personal experience) whenever I perpetrated a Press article on a technical point of everyday terminology, some enthusiastic amateurs were certain to write and ask what books they should buy in order to follow up the subject.

If there is one subject which more than another has intrigued the ordinary music-lover, it is that which bears the terrifying title of Counterpoint. To hear a musical professor roll out the word was like listening to the whole of the Law and the Prophets or the entire decalogue chanted from the slopes of Sinai. One solemn utterance of the mystic syllables was sufficient to reduce an army of amateurs to silence and discomfiture.

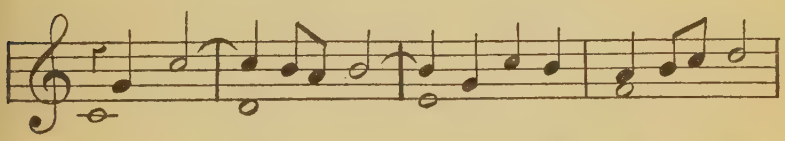
Now, what is this counterpoint which has overawed the amateur for so many generations, which every aspirant to a musical degree or diploma was required to study if he wished to pass his examinations? It is a bogey, a humbug, a solemn pretence. Like all other bogeys, it is terrifying at a distance and so pathetically ridiculous at close quarters that we wonder what on earth we have been afraid of. Every musician has known this all along; every enlightened professor has recognised the fact; but it is only in our own generation that any of them have had the courage to say so.

About a decade ago Mr. Frederick Corder, a professor at the Royal Academy of Music, dropped a bombshell into

the camp by reading a paper (on the difficulties of teaching counterpoint) before The Musical Association. As Mr. Corder is an eminent man in his profession, and had taught counterpoint for thirty-five years, he at least could not be suspected of iconoclasm. He is one of the strongest advocates of "strict counterpoint" up to a very definite point, but this is what he says of the subject as taught for examination purposes:

> What is strict counterpoint? Is it any more than an educational fiction—as unreal a language of convenience as Hindustani or Levantine or Esperanto? . . . It is the assumption—the pretence—that strict counterpoint is a semi-sacred language, like Latin, that everybody must study, yet nobody ever acquire, that benumbs the student.

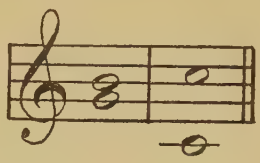
He then gave the following example of "strict counterpoint," which would pass a student triumphantly at any examination, adding that, however you may explain it to a sensible pupil, he has to put a severe strain on his powers of belief before he can accept "as stepping-stones to a musical career such fatuous things as this":



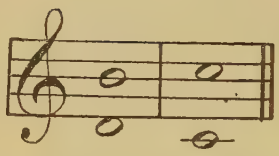
He then told an amusing story of a little twelve-year-old girl-pupil of his who went up for her annual exam., and not having yet done any "fifth species" counterpoint, made a shot at the question in her paper, guided only by her own musicality. This is how she did it:

And of course—for this brilliant little exhibition of musicianship—the examiner would not give her a single mark. "I should have given her full marks," added Mr. Corder.

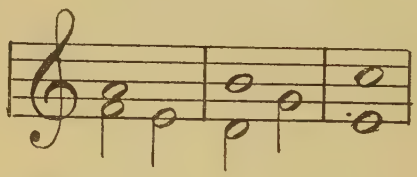
He pertinently asked why you should be expected to tell students that the cadence



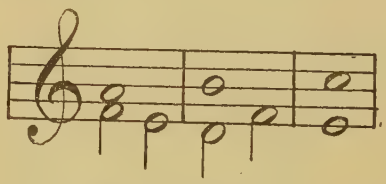
is not so good as



Also, why should a student pass his examination if he writes—



and fail if he writes—



The intelligent amateur may likewise wonder why. He may well wonder how this amazing fabric of rules was built up—rules which have no application to any music that was ever written. In literature we go to the great

authors, and *on what they have written* we compile our grammars. We acknowledge equally the authority of the great composers, but in counterpoint we have compiled our grammars *on what they have not written.* The only parallel for this strange process of putting the cart before the horse is those two pathetic failures—Volapük and Esperanto. There you have a grammar without a literature, just as in academic counterpoint. How has it all come about?

Briefly (and very roughly) stated: counterpoint was once a living art. But that was in the old days (up to the seventeenth century), when music was written in the ancient *Modes*—harmony, as we understand the term, not having been invented.

Then came harmony with the major and minor keys, and a new idiom sprang into being. To put it roughly again—combined melodies gave place to chords and their progressions. Musical part-writing was constructed vertically instead of horizontally. The idea of the modern contrapuntists—that there was no valid reason why melodies should not be combined as before—was quite sound, but when they began (with Fux in the eighteenth century) to lay down their rules, they forbade the use of chords which were then in actual being and were used by every composer. This amazing inconsistency was bad enough, but it was even worse when they insisted on the observance of the old rules which were reasonable and logical as applied to *Modes*, but were devoid of sense or reason when applied to *Keys.*

Some of us are old enough to remember the excitement in academic circles over an article (bearing the title that I have purloined for this chapter) which appeared in 1900 in a journal called *The Chord.* The writer began by saying that every music student, if compelled to speak the truth about counterpoint, would say he hated it. "Beethoven himself got tired of the lessons of Papa Haydn, and left counterpoint to those who had less serious work

in the world than he saw before him. Almost to his dying day Schubert had thoughts of mastering it. Schumann never more than half knew it. Wagner learnt all he wanted to learn in about six months, and never troubled more about it. Yet to-day thousands of young men and women are labouring to attain to a mastery of simple counterpoint in two, three, four, and up to eight parts; of double, triple and quadruple counterpoint; of canon and fugue. They all detest and loathe their work, and when they come out of school they regard the years spent on it as mainly waste of time. Why is this?"

Then, nearly twenty-three years later, another writer (Mr. R. O. Morris) asked the same question, and answered it in an invaluable book entitled *Contrapuntal Technique*. Speaking of the "Rules" with which academic counterpoint is hedged round, he says: "Who invented them, goodness only knows; why they have been perpetuated, it passes the wit of man to explain. Music written to meet their requirements is something altogether *sui generis*, a purely academic by-product—

'Music that never was on sea or land.'

What, then, are we going to do? The rules of counterpoint are found to have no connection with musical composition as in the sixteenth century. Are we to abandon the rules, or abandon the sixteenth century? follow Byrd and Palestrina, or follow Mr. Rockstro and Professor Prout?"

Mr. Morris put his finger first of all on the weak spot in academic counterpoint—Rhythm. So did *The Chord* writer of twenty-six years ago. Summing up the absurdities of academic counterpoint, he said: "Rhythm is not so much as thought of." Mr. Morris dots his i's and crosses his t's: "For three hundred years or so we have been slaves of the bar line, and our conception of rhythm has become purely metrical. . . . Of the wider implications of the term 'rhythm' and of its true nature,

we have suffered ourselves to remain in complete ignorance. To the sixteenth century (composers) we can turn, not in vain, for guidance. In that period there is no confusion between rhythm and metre."

Not to burden the general reader with technicalities, it is true to say that "examination counterpoint" must be written (if the candidate has no wish to be ploughed) according to rules which no composer of music ever observed. Whenever a student—more musicianly than his fellows—has kicked against these rules, he has been told that although they might have nothing to do with music as written by the great masters, yet the "discipline" of them would give him greater ease and fluency when he came to compose music himself. To say that you can acquire fluency in musical composition by learning a set of rules that have nothing to do with it is as reasonable as to urge that by learning to speak Chocktaw you will acquire greater fluency in French.

Musical composers who went through the mill and then laughed at these fatuous "rules" were regarded in academic circles as dangerous, and students were duly warned against them. Students who saw through the solemn sham were cast into outer darkness as ignorant and unscholarly rebels against authority. The trouble, however, has hitherto been that while students have been thus divided into "rebels" and "good boys," the latter class has had innumerable counterpoint treatises written for it, and the former has been without a literature for its guidance. So no wonder the obscurantists have been able to pose as the "scholarly" musicians, and a careless public has accepted them at their own valuation. No one ventured to tackle them on their own ground.

Then came Mr. Morris's book—the book of a musician whose scholarship and research could not be ignored by the most hardened professor. The author demolishes the absurd fabric of academic counterpoint, but he is no iconoclast. So far from preaching revolt against discipline, he

insists on the law and order of "rules." Only they are to be the rules of the *great* masters, and not those of the eighteenth-century *school* masters.

So now, dear amateurs in music, take comfort. At last you have this subject stripped of its mysteries in a book which is the work of a scholar who is no pedant; of a musician who is no "undisciplined rebel"; of a teacher who knows how to make the old dry bones live; of a man of letters whose easy, supple style carries you so smoothly over technical snags that you feel you are reading an interesting book rather than a learned treatise. I confess I was unable to put it down until I had read it from cover to cover. It lifts the study of counterpoint from the mere arithmetic of the examination-room to the plane of real music. A few more books on the same sane and reasonable lines and counterpoint will no longer deserve the title of "The Dismal Science."

XXXVI

THE OBSESSION OF THE HYMN-TUNE

Of all forms of church music, the one which seems to have wielded an influence out of all proportion to its intrinsic worth is the vernacular hymn. That the vernacular hymn should play a great part in popular (as distinguished from liturgical) worship is only natural. Furthermore, it is quite right and proper that this should be so. Every great religious revival in European history has had its popular hymns, in which were crystallised the fundamentals of the revival—in which the emotions and aspirations of the revivalists found scope and vent.

The true student of hymnology naturally approaches his subject impersonally. His own religious standpoint is outside the question altogether. Neither his own nor anyone else's religious predilections interpose between his judgment and the particular hymn or hymns under examination. The sole questions for him, then, are: (1) Is this hymn a true reflection of the movement which produced it? (2) Are its literary and musical qualities commensurate with the ideals of the movements which produced it? If both questions can be answered in the affirmative, then we can say that the hymn is a good one—that, in fact, it "rings true."

The religious tension of the sixteenth century produced hymns—both Catholic and Protestant—that have become well-nigh immortal. The revival of the Wesleys produced some of the best religious verse that has been written. But it is not of great movements like these that I want to speak. After the first force of a religious revival has been spent, and its adherents are settling down to quieter times and in smoother waters, there comes the danger that always attends stereotyped forms. When the hymn is no longer a battle-cry, but a comfortable convention, it tends to lose some of its original vigour and conviction, and become a pale reflection of its original self. That, however, does not prevent its being a faithful and vivid reflection of the mentality of its authors. If the

times are comfortable and ease-loving, this habit of mind is bound to show itself in hymnology. The Tractarian movement in England produced Neale and Keble. The early Tractarian hymns were set to tunes of equal dignity and distinction. Then came the nice, easy, pleasant days of mid-Victorianism, when comfort and prosperity (in this world and the next) were the popular ideals. The good old psalm-tunes of their ancestors were too "severe" for the Victorians. And so it was not long before they were luxuriating in the luscious harmonies of Dykes, Barnby, and their imitators. Hymns were no longer battle-cries; they had become conventions. Hymn-tunes no longer inspired to conflict; they soothed the senses and pandered to surface emotions.

In this decadence *Hymns Ancient and Modern* led the van. Mus.Docs., Mus.Bacs., cathedral and collegiate organists poured out beautifully correct and blameless harmonies all in the same pattern, and nearly all devoid of virility. Other denominational hymn-books followed suit, and the vernacular hymn entered on a period of degradation, unrelieved until the advent of *The English Hymnal*, *The Yattendon Hymnal*, and *Songs of Syon*. Later followed *The Oxford Hymnal*—another good book. In 1904 the then committee of *Hymns Ancient and Modern* made a gallant attempt to undo the mischief wrought by their predecessors. They published a revised edition of their book, from which most of the mid-Victorian sentimentalities had been eliminated. But, alas! the mischief could not be undone. A whole generation's taste had been debauched, and for a virile book—such as the 1904 edition of *Hymns Ancient and Modern*—there was no popular demand.

During all this time British folk-song had been falling into desuetude. Hymn-tunes were the only popular music known with anything like universality. Folk-song collecting had not begun. Folk-song forms were obsolete. Hymn-tune forms held the field firmly. Messrs. Sankey

and Moody created a vogue for a particularly vulgar type of tune, and "Moody and Sankey" tunes competed for favour with the latest music-hall ditty that could be whistled by the carman or the butcher's boy. Any ephemeral verse that appeared was clothed in hymn-tune music, for lack of better. *Hold the fort* did duty for many an election lampoon in Gladstonian days. And so on, down to our own times, when Wesley's tune *Aurelia* became a war-time marching song with words that were varied and pungent.

In fact, it is not too much to say that even now the Briton always bursts out into hymn-tunes on every occasion when other nationalities would sing national or other folk-songs. When the occasion produces a versifier (as during the war) who merely uses a hymn-tune as a vehicle for the expression of his verses, the result is either humorous or the reverse, but at any rate it has point.

But it is different when the occasion is religious or semi-religious—the Christmas season, for example. We are only slowly getting back to the real carol, thanks to the labours of those collectors who have devoted their time to the task. Consequently we are entertained both in and out of church with so-called carols that are only hymn-tunes in disguise. In the streets (where once the real carol reigned supreme) we have hymn-tunes with no disguise at all. What point or relevance to the Christmas season has *Abide with me* (with which I was regaled last Yuletide)? The only conclusion one can draw from the grotesque inconsequence of the orgy of hymn-tunes in which would-be carollers indulge at Christmastide is that we have lost our sense of proportion, and, what is worse, have lost that sense of humour which has always characterised us as a nation.

The lads who sang to Wesley's tune:

> "We are Fred Carno's army,
> We are the A.S.C.,
> We cannot shoot, we cannot fight,
> What earthly use are we?

And when we get to Berlin
The Kaiser he will say,
'Hoch, hoch, mein Gott,'" etc., etc.,

had at least realised that definition of humour which describes it as "the difference between what you expect and what you get."

Here we had no attempt at relevance, but there was plenty of point.

Abide with me, and other dismal hymn-tunes, played or sung as *Christmas carols* on the doorsteps of unoffending citizens have neither relevancy nor point.

We put up with an intolerable nuisance for several weeks before Christmas. Why?

Just because, although we mayn't like dismal hymn-tunes, we are each of us afraid to be the first to say so.

We are afraid to say that there is nothing "sacred" about bad hymn-tunes, except that they are used in church. When will we pluck up courage to say that a bad tune remains a bad tune, whether used in church or not?

XXXVII

THE GENESIS OF A POPULAR TUNE

It has been the fate of many composers whose names have become what we term "household words" to have spurious compositions fathered upon them, which an incurious and uncritical public accepts as genuine. Even in the case of compositions described as "from So-and-so" or "adapted from So-and-so," we are generally too lazy to follow the matter up, and see how far "So-and-so" *is* responsible for the music attributed to him.

Another odd thing is that once a secular piece of music is proved spurious, the old legends about its source are speedily scrapped. We vie with each other in dissociating ourselves—either directly or by implication—from the exploded belief concerning it. But "in quires and places where they sing" a piece of music may be proved spurious a hundred times over without producing any appreciable result. The old legends continue, the old *clichés* are repeated, the innocent composer's name is still retained. We are unabashed and unashamed if it is pointed out to us that hymn "So-and-so" or the anthem "Such-and-such" is not by the composer to whom we have always attributed it. But should a critic convict us of sharing the popular belief that Schubert wrote *Death and the Maiden*, we are covered with confusion.

The writer has recently come up against an example of this curious persistency of error "in quires and places where they sing" with regard to a popular hymn-tune whose true history he fondly imagined had long ago become public property.

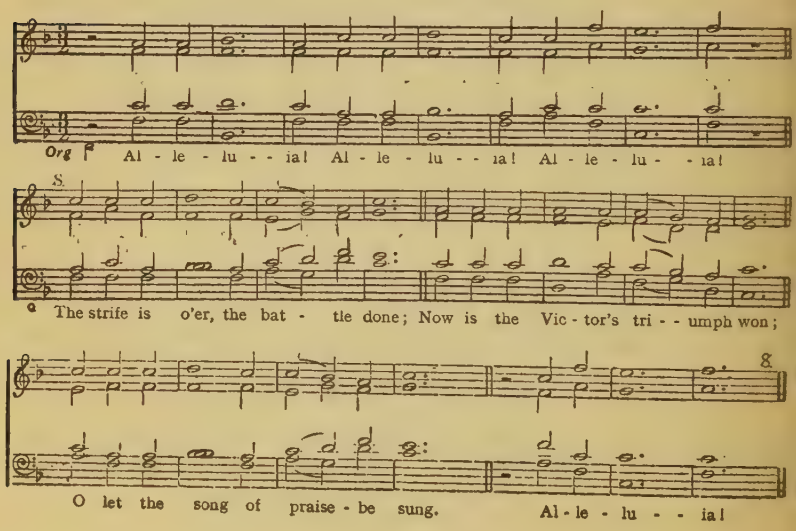
It is doubtful if there is a single person in this country who has never heard the Easter hymn, *The strife is o'er, the battle done*, with its popular tune, as given in *Hymns Ancient and Modern*. In the index to that hymnal, the tune is cited as "from Palestrina," and its Palestrinian source was universally accepted. But what composition of Palestrina it was "from" remained more or less of a mystery to the general public until the publication of

Dr. Frere's critical and historical edition of *Hymns A. and M.* Dr. Frere showed that the tune was adapted from the *Gloria Patri* belonging to a *Magnificat* in the Third Mode. He quoted the original (in short score), from which it was evident that the music set to the repeated *Alleluias* is an addition by Dr. W. H. Monk (one of the original editors of *Hymns A. and M.*).

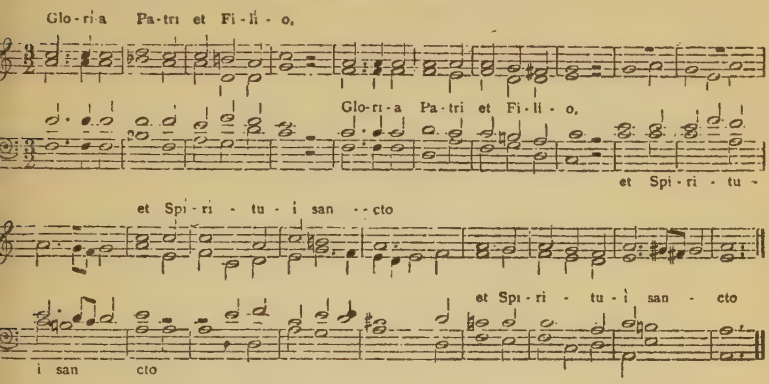
This was all so straightforward and correct that one could not imagine any further ignorance or misunderstanding concerning the tune. But since (as I have hinted above) I have recently heard it quoted (in high quarters, too) as an example of Palestrina's style, I am constrained to make yet one more attempt to lay the ghost.

I quote the tune, together with its original, and a comparison of the two will show how precious little of the former is Palestrina's and how badly that little reflects his style. I quote both in the original pitch (Monk's version was transposed into the key of E major) (*a*) for purposes of easier comparison, and (*b*) because Palestrina never wrote anything in four sharps.

Here is Monk's version as it appears in *Hymns A. and M.*:



Here is Palestrina's original. Note the way in which Monk has reduced its free-flowing alto and tenor to monuments of stodginess and stickiness :



You will note that Palestrina's original runs to 19 bars, and that only 8 of them are utilised in Monk's hymn-tune (bars 9 to 12 being merely a repetition of bars 1 to 4).

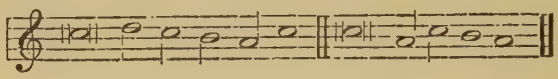
Note further that in Monk's tune (since it is written in the major *key*) the note B is persistently flattened. In Palestrina's original (since it is written in the Third *Mode*) every B is natural, save only those in bar 2.

And it is here that the fun begins. For the writer has heard a very good musician (learned in many matters, but unlearned in Plainsong) argue that since Palestrina chose to flatten his B in accordance with the laws of *musica ficta*, Monk was equally justified in flattening his B (in bars 10 and 18) because it occurs in a descending passage.[1] That this argument has much force under other conditions I freely

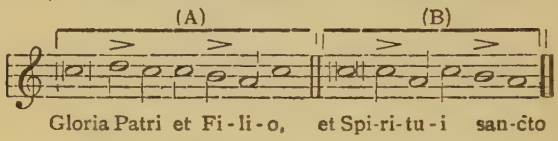
[1] My Mus.Doc. friend does not stand alone in this error. Even the egregious Haberl (that solemn pedant who humbugged Europe for the best part of a half-century)—in his edition of the complete works of Palestrina—comes a cropper over an unintelligent application of this rule about flattening the B in a descending passage. In bar 11 of our second musical illustration Haberl flattens Palestrina's B in the bass part, oblivious of the fact that the Gregorian chant which Palestrina was using as a *canto fermo* is a fixed and not a variable quantity, and that a B flat at that particular point is an *alteration*, without justification in a Third Mode melody.

admit, but (as we shall see later) it has no force here, if we realise what Palestrina was driving at.

Palestrina's *Magnificat* is (as I have said) written in the Third Mode. He only sets the odd verses contrapuntally for *choral* singing; the even verses are to be sung *in unison* to the Gregorian (Third Mode) chant. Here is the chant:



Had Palestrina chosen to set the first part of his *Gloria Patri* to the Gregorian chant instead of to part-music, it would (in his particular century) have run thus:



So now you see what Palestrina was about. His *Gloria Patri* is simply a piece of contrapuntal writing in which this chant is used continuously as *canto fermo*. The first section of the chant is used first in the treble and then in the tenor. (Note how beautifully the two phrases rhyme with each other, bar by bar, in the matter of rhythm. And note how Monk destroys the piquancy of this rhythm [bars 8 and 12] by his three stodgy minims in place of 𝅗𝅥 𝅘𝅥 𝅗𝅥.)

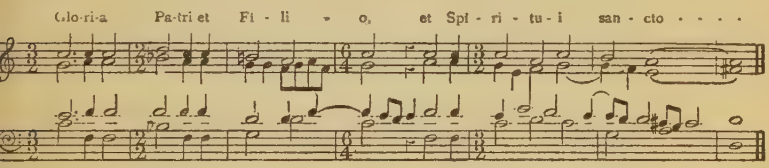
Palestrina then takes the second section of the chant, and uses it as *canto fermo* in bass, treble and tenor successively; the third repetition being in the nature of a reposeful coda before the whole piece comes to rest on A. He finishes on A *because that note* (accompanied by its chord) *is the "Final" of the chant.* (For the sake of clearness I have only given the words of the *canti fermi.*)

Monk then lays clumsy fingers on this perfectly constructed, beautifully balanced and delicately poised little gem, first destroying its modal character; secondly destroying its rhythm; and finally mauling its harmonies

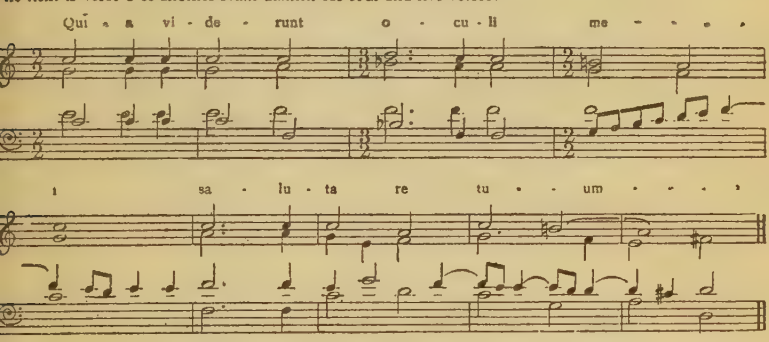
about, till *only one bar* (the thirteenth) remains as Palestrina wrote it. Even when he does get his chords in the same position as Palestrina's, he alters the values of the notes. And yet—"in quires and places where they sing"—Doctor Monk's grotesque perversion is still quoted as an example of Palestrina's style.

One would naturally have thought that Dr. Frere's comments were sufficient to break down any further defence of Monk's persistent B flat. But since I have so recently heard that defence urged, it may be well (at the risk of slaying the slain) to quote two more examples of Palestrina's treatment of this selfsame chant (*canto fermo* this time in the treble throughout).

The first is the *Gloria Patri* to a *Nunc Dimittis* for four voices:



The next is verse 2 of another *Nunc dimittis* for four and five voices:



Here you will observe the same modal characteristics which mark the *Gloria* that Monk mutilated; the identical *cliché* regarding the "accidental" B flat; and the rigid adherence (in the *canto fermo*) to the actual notes of the Gregorian chant—involving a persistent B natural.

You will also note that I have here refrained from criticism of Monk's work considered merely as a hymn-tune. In that respect it is better than the majority of its fellows in the book. All we ask is that in future it should bear Monk's name as the author, and be no longer fathered on the unfortunate Palestrina. The poor man is dead and cannot retaliate.

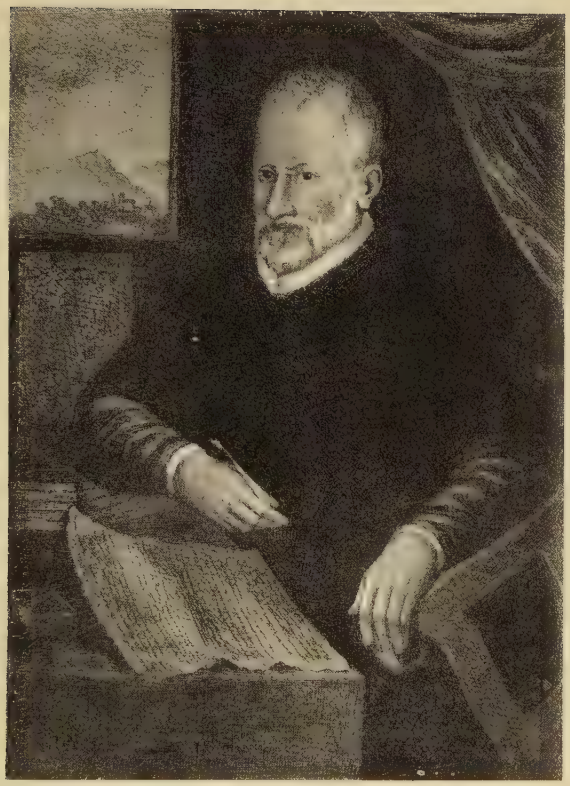


PLATE IX—GIOVANNI PIERLUIGI PALESTRINA
[1525–1594]

XXXVIII

WHAT IS AN ANTHEM?

I AM not going to repeat the hoary anecdote of the sailor who said, "Bill, wot's a Hanthem?" and received the historic answer about a handspike. Neither am I going to differentiate between (*a*) choirs and (*b*) places where they sing. The *Book of Common Prayer* does that with naïve and gentle irony, and that is enough. All that concerns us is that at a certain point in Morning or Evening Prayer either (*a*) in choirs or (*b*) in places where they sing "here followeth the anthem." This recognition of the anthem as an integral part of the service gives it a status which it is impossible to ignore. Choirs of modest technique usually substitute a hymn, but those with any pretensions to efficiency follow the Prayer Book directions. Follow them —that is—in the matter of singing "an anthem," about the artistic quality of which it is sometimes wisest to say nothing. The law of supply and demand has created a bulky literature of anthems, ranging from the masterpiece to the sugary effusions of the mid-Victorians; from the secular Caroline type to the more devotional one of Attwood, Walmisley or Wesley.

The Anglican Church has a fine storehouse of anthems by Elizabethan composers, but up to the present they have been neglected, and such of them as found their way into Boyce's collection were mangled in accordance with the depraved taste of Boyce's time.

Nor need one waste time over the productions of the eighteenth century with their banal harmonies, and their cadences every eight bars, or the pale copies of Handel by Dr. Greene and others. Excepting in very conservative quarters they were driven out by the Mendelssohn boom, which held the field until quite recently, which produced Dykes and Barnby and Smart, and reached its apogee in the immortal works of Messrs. —— and ——, the "best sellers" of all.

A general consensus of opinion amongst Anglican musicians has now placed these types in their proper

perspective. A better standard of taste prevails to-day, thanks largely to those who had the courage of their convictions in the dark days of the 'eighties and 'nineties, and who formed the taste of those who now stand for a high ideal in the matter of church music.

But the bad traditions of those bad days are not all worn down yet. There still lingers the old superstition that an anthem must of necessity be written for "mixed voices"—in other words, for the inevitable treble, alto, tenor, and bass combination. (The number of "boy's voice" or "male voice" anthems is so small in proportion as to be negligible.) There is the further superstition that every anthem must be accompanied on the organ, in spite of the splendid tradition of unaccompanied singing which the Competition Festivals are re-establishing, and the ease with which at least a few violins can be obtained in every parish. Is there, moreover, any reason why the paucity (or absence) of tenors in small parishes should not result in a supply for S.A.B., instead of the usual makeshift, by which baritones strangle themselves over the tenor line so that the fetish of "four parts" may be upheld? Is there any reason why raucous and incompetent male singers should be employed at all when young children are always available? Are there not many solos by the great composers which would make a most devotional "anthem" if sung by trebles or altos in unison? Such books of solos as the Novello selections from Bach ought to be in every small parish choir. The children can sing them quite intelligently; their performances at Competition Festivals proves that abundantly. Why, then, should we have to listen to the struggles of singers with harmony beyond their powers when we have to hand such devotional exercises as unison music by the best composers, of all degrees of simplicity (or difficulty if necessary), easily rendered by children, and masterly as to form?

We laugh at the sailor's notion of an anthem, but is it

any more ludicrous than the choirman's superstition that a piece of music cannot be an anthem unless in the conventional four parts (with a possible solo thrown in)? How much better it would be to scrap convention and let children draw their unison anthems from the solos of the great masters, instead of wearisome repetitions of stock anthems by third-, fourth- and fifth-rate composers, who can only think in the sacred "four parts"!

The popular anthem repels not only by its sentimentality, but by its stereotyped adherence to the "four-parts" fetish. Even these defects do not antagonise the musician so much as its general formlessness. I have accidentally turned up a ten-year-old volume (*Thirteen Arias or Solo Anthems*, by F. W. Bussell, Mus.Bac., Fellow of Brasenose College, Oxford) which has a definite bearing on this point and which deserves a better fate than being eventually scrapped by its composer for lack of support "in choirs and places where they sing."

Dr. Bussell (himself an Anglican clergyman) writes:

All serious musicians must be struck by the feebleness, the raggedness, the dearth of rhythmic emphasis and interest in much of these post-Mendelssohn writings. Some of our best church composers, like —— and ——, are among the chief offenders. Sir Hubert Parry . . . goes back to an older and more wholesome model in his famous air in *Judith* . . . more akin to Bach . . . than anything written in the last sixty years preceding it. . . . The usual sacred aria is too often . . . over-simple with a sort of infantine piety; full, perhaps, of beautiful phrases, but without connection or careful development, broken up too frequently into short and unrhythmic sections, accompanied, or rather sustained, by hymn-tune chords.

Even the best of our English anthems are curiously feeble, restless, and disjointed.

After speaking of the "pseudo-impressive" music, which depends for its effect on mere alternation of tonic and

dominant, Dr. Bussell drops destructive criticism and gives reasons for the faith that is in him, answering by anticipation the question with which this chapter is headed. He says:

> The first requirement for a sacred anthem is a "tune"; the next, a steady development on the old classical lines; the third, the perfecting of all the accessories—the attendants, as it were, upon the sovereign melody, "The virgins that be her fellows."

He develops these three themes quite convincingly, and follows it by an *apologia* to musicians for the specific methods employed in his music. Here one cannot help feeling that his defence has been sent to the wrong address. There is no musician of to-day who would think a defence necessary for the form Dr. Bussell employs. He is clearly thinking of the mandarins who counted in church-music circles when he was a young man *in statu pupillari*. Well, the present-day leading church musician is of different calibre, so why bother?

In the course of explaining his methods in detail, Dr. Bussell has some wise remarks to make:

> In many places where the organ merely "fills in," I would much rather have left a plain figured bass, to be varied from time to time according to the needs of the singer and the taste of the organist. . . . The accompaniment (in anthems) is far too much stereotyped, the playing far too servile and mechanical. . . . After all, the composer really *suggests* only; he ought not to *dictate*: why should he seek to fill up every outlet of individuality, like a bureaucrat who cannot trust the judgment of any private citizen. . . . Playing from a figured bass, where the organ is merely supplementary, should be learned and taught as well as harmony and counterpoint. The modern anthem . . . might be much reduced in bulk and cost if the performer was not so highly fettered, in unessentials and mere details, to slavery to the letter.

Here every musician will agree with him; also when he waggishly remarks that modern anthems "are overladen with expression marks—sometimes there is little in them beyond expression."

In my youth I spent a good deal of leisure time in writing first and second fiddle parts for anthems and services which a clergyman friend liked doing at Harvest or other Festivals. These parts had to be independent, but not too difficult for "Jacky Forster" and "Jimmy Maffin," and several other miners who also "played the voylin." Had Dr. Bussell's book existed then, Jacky and Jimmy would have had real "voylin" parts after their own hearts—independent, rhythmic, definite as to form, and not beyond their powers. Here they would have had the delight of feeling themselves partakers in a *complete* musical work, in which the two "voylins" were not an apology for the string quartet, but a substitute (together with the organ, of course).

The disappearance of the village band from the west gallery has not been an unmixed blessing. Its revival would be welcome if only to give us relief from the eternal organ accompaniment to anthems. If this happy consummation is ever to come about, I hope Dr. Bussell's anthems will come into their own, too. They are gracefully conceived, beautifully designed, and grateful both to voices and instruments. They are dignified enough for a big cathedral, and intimate enough for a village church. One can only hope that the composer may one day reconsider his decision, and once more place them on the market.

XXXIX

THE DECAY OF ORGAN EXTEMPORISATION

In the year 1921 a French organist visited these shores. His tour was magnificently boomed and much discussed. One of the items in his programmes was "Extemporisation on themes supplied by the audience," and this set us all a-talking on a topic whose interest for many years back had been mainly academic.

When composers took the precaution of writing their own cadenzas, the extemporisations of singers, fiddlers, flautists and the like ceased, and now belong to ancient history. Nor do pianists nowadays extemporise in public. What was once a fairly universal practice is now confined to the organ, and that seldom elsewhere than at church services, for—in this country at least—extemporisation never seems to appear as an item in organ recitals.

Even in church services it seems to be a rapidly vanishing factor, since one can hardly dignify with the title of extemporisation the formless improvisations which are only interpolated to fill up gaps. Yet the days are not far distant when Henry Smart and his contemporaries used to extemporise between each verse of a hymn, and in my own boyhood I remember Dr. Rea (and his generation of organists) giving long extempore pieces at the end of the Psalms. During these improvisations the congregation sat down to listen, and the reader of "the First Lesson" never dreamt of walking to the lectern until the music stopped. That kind of extemporisation has disappeared, and the only type one now hears is an improvised voluntary before or after service, either because the organist is specially gifted in that line or is too lazy to play a set piece. (Even the extempore introduction to the anthem is becoming a rarity.) To the former class belonged S. S. Wesley, and the nobility of his tradition may be judged by those who have heard his pupil—Dr. Kendrick Pyne. In this country the days of extemporisation in the grand manner are all but gone, and we have succeeded to a vogue of the negligible manner. Players

of real technical ability prefer to show their skill in set pieces. The organist has become more an interpreter than a creator of music, and (for reasons which need not be discussed here) I am not sure but that it is a good thing.

I fancy this decline in "the grand manner" of extemporising is due to two factors:

(1) In the old days of simple musical services, extempore organ interludes afforded the necessary relief in a more or less monotonous musical scheme. Now that elaborate services and anthems are the rule, the necessity for this relief is not so insistent.

(2) In the old days, organists were accustomed to play largely from a figured bass, and considerable skill—both harmonically and contrapuntally—was required to do this effectively. Nowadays, when every organ part is printed in full, there is little scope for the exercise of the inventive faculty on the part of the player. In the days of figured basses the organist had to be able to create at least harmonic progressions of his own. Now he can live out his entire professional existence without the necessity of creating a single original note of music. This disability has been intensified by the prevalent system of musical examinations—examinees being required to *write* upon figured basses instead of *playing* from them. Writing on figured basses is a mere matter of arithmetic which any intelligent plumber and gasfitter could easily acquire. Playing from figured basses postulates a certain amount of musicianship and originality. Our examination system has nurtured the arithmetic and killed the musicianship of this particular exercise. Whether or not these two factors give the real reason for the decline in extemporaneous playing, there seems little doubt that they have removed two powerful incentives to individuality and inventiveness on the part of the church organist.

I do not mean to say that extemporisation is altogether dead. I could name many organists (at cathedrals and elsewhere) who are in this respect masters of their craft.

I could to-day write down from memory the thematic material (with a sketch of its working out) of an extemporisation I heard in a certain provincial cathedral twenty years ago. This argues both strong themes and original treatment of them.

I cannot speak with authority on church extemporisation in Spain or Italy, but my experiences in France and Germany are those with which English travellers are familiar. In both countries one notices the presence of a definite tradition—in Germany the Chorale, and in France the Plainsong. The atmosphere is already created, and the organist has only to reproduce it. In England the organist has not such a definite tradition, so that the atmosphere he creates is more the individual and personal reflection of his mood and less the reflection of a tradition. Of organists with this gift of creating an atmosphere, two stand out in my memory. Dr. Harford Lloyd's preludes to Evensong at Christ Church (as I first heard them in 1887) were things to be remembered for the rest of one's life; and Dr. Hopkins's interludes at the Temple Church, if less rich in thematic material, at least exhaled a devotional warmth that carried conviction. Architecturally, the Temple Church is one of the most beautiful in England. Interiorly, it is disfigured by a fantastic arrangement of benches, apparently designed to make it resemble a public hall as far as possible. Hopkins's extemporisations attuned us to the glorious architectural sweep of the building, and made us oblivious of the squalid benches.

German extemporisation, at its best, is contrapuntal, and Bach-like; the registration is solid, and diapason work predominates. At its worst, it is dull and barren, with monotonous repetitions of a queer formula which it is not worth wasting music-type to quote.

French extemporisation at its best is vivid, picturesque and descriptive. Where the German confines himself to working out a theme, the Frenchman develops an atmosphere. However flamboyant he may be, the Plainsong

background prevents his lapsing entirely into secularity. He is fonder of orchestral effects than the German, and uses reeds more freely than flue work. At its worst it is noisy, brassy, and only redeemed from absolute vulgarity by the Plainsong tradition.

XL

SHANTIES AT SHORESTON

MID-AUGUST at last, and at least one weary critic is at peace, where performers cease from troubling and recitals are at rest.

I have spent to-day with an ancient mariner who sailed in deep-sea vessels fifty years ago, and has—since the advent of steam—settled down in this north-east-coast village to the more prosaic calling of fisherman. But the romance of deep-sea voyages clings to him. He has been singing me shanties—those fascinating songs of sea-labour that died out with the old sailing ships, and are now but a memory—and I have noted them down from his singing. And what a perfect setting for our music!

> "Grey hills, grey skies, grey lights,
> And still grey sea."

To seaward lie the Farnes, where the sentinel tower of Longstone Lighthouse still holds memory of Grace Darling and her wondrous feat that has now become a legend. Behind us roll the Cheviots, and to norrard looms the castle of Bamborough on its lowering crag, silhouetted against

> "Grey clouds that sweetly darken
> O'er my North Countrie."

The ebb tide has bared the brown rocks, and a westering breeze brings the pungent tang of the bladder-wrack to our grateful nostrils. On either hand the pale green bents are splashed with patches of ragwort whose flaming yellow has given place to the dull gold of autumn. Far down the stretch of sandy beach the swish of the reluctant ebb reaches the ear, and at my side the old man croons the old-time melodies of a day that is gone. Steam has taken the romance from the sailor's life. His labour-songs ceased when the sailing ship—his pride and his boast—was driven from the face of the waters. In old time every labourer sang at his work—the harvester with his sickle,

the weaver at his loom. But for richness of invention and strange romantic beauty few labour-songs can equal those of the sailor. He called them " shanties " —a word which literary preciosity (because of a purely supposititious derivation from the French) has converted into " chanties," a proceeding that effectively obscures the origin of the term, both as regards etymology and pronunciation.

Each form of sea-labour had its own shanty, or class of shanties. For getting under weigh it would be *Good-bye, fare you well*, or the noble melody of *Rio Grande*; for the halliards, *Tom's gone to Hilo*; for warping her in, the notorious *Hog's-eye Man* (which literary men and unnautical folksongers will spell as " Hog-eyed "—again obscuring the real meaning of the term); for bunting the foresail or mainsail, the inevitable *Paddy Doyle's Boots*, and so on.

The seventy-five summers of my old singer have not dimmed his eye nor clouded his understanding. A little shy at first, he soon warms to his work as memory crowds on memory, and his face lightens and his head is erect as he recalls the haunting tunes of *Shenandoah*, *Across the Western Ocean*, *Ranzo Boys*, and *Lowlands Away*.

The strange thing to the mere landsman is that a sailor's most sentimental memories are bound up with shanties whose words are either grotesque or unprintable. In his *Sailor's Garland*, Masefield gives a vivid description of one such tune, and speaks truly when he says how touchingly beautiful it is. And yet the words are:

> " They call me hanging Johnny—
> Away, boys, away.
> They says I hangs for money—
> Oh, hang, boys, hang.

The shanty goes on to relate how Johnny hangs his father, mother and entire family—all to this inexpressibly beautiful and plaintive air. But whatever the words may be, the tunes are all fine ones; they range in sentiment

from rollicking rhythms to tender voluptuousness. Some of them are as old as Drake; many belong to the days of Nelson; and not a few are as modern as the 'fifties.

From our seat, my singer and I can overlook the track of vessels northward or southward bound, but the stately ships of old time, with their snowy canvas outspread, are no more seen. Yet that self-same track once echoed to the chant of many voices. The voices are stilled, but the melodies live on in the hearts of a few old men whose course is all but run. It is something of a national duty that these tunes should be rescued from oblivion before it is too late. They are national assets; they merit loving preservation. They illuminate a noble period of our maritime history, and to allow them to die would be to drop out an important chapter in that history.

There is at present something of a boom in shanties, but with the exception of Captain Whall's book, *Sea Songs, Ships, and Shanties*, the collections in existence are the compilations of landsmen unacquainted with nautical affairs and ignorant of nautical terms. Captain Whall deals only incidentally with shanties, which is a pity, as the tunes he does give are authentic, and his versions of the words have the true ring. So we must be content to await the ideal collaboration—not hitherto effected—of sailor and musician; we may then have a definitive and critical edition of a branch of national musical art, the value of which we are only beginning to realise, now that we are in danger of losing it.

My old singer says that the singing of these melodies to me has revived old memories that were well-nigh dead. But once stirred, they will remain; so I leave him to dream his dreams of the good old days that are gone, that leave behind them so sweet and pleasant a savour. For these old tunes reflect every phase of the sailor's life—its hardness, its toil, its privations; but they also tell of sunlit seas, and far-off lands, and strange peoples; of drowsy, halcyon days in the Spanish Main, still a mystic region of

romance; of longings for home; of bitter partings and glad meetings; of love and death. Let the words be what they may—trivial, commonplace, or even coarse—they are redeemed by the noble melodies. We are wont to speak patronisingly of "poor" Jack, and to think of him only as a hard liver, a hard drinker and hard fighter. But these wonderful tunes of his own creation show him to have been something of an artist as well.

XLI

A HOLIDAY IN CRANFORD

From London to Cranford is a far cry, but the change of scene has been exhilarating. Miss Matty's little shop has, alas! been brought up to date; tea and comfits (by the way, what *are* comfits?) are now supplemented by mere vulgar groceries. But the quaint old place is still in possession of the Amazons; "all the holders of houses above a certain rent are women. If married couples come to settle in the town, somehow the gentleman disappears; he is either frightened to death by being the only man in the Cranford evening parties, or he is accounted for by being with his regiment, his ship, or closely engaged in business in the neighbouring town," distant only seven miles on a railroad.

The station is shut on Sundays to discourage Sabbath travelling, with such success that the highway becomes a roaring torrent of charabancs.

The streets (unlit at night) have not yet been spoiled by modern dwellings. The houses are Georgian, Queen Anne, or pure Elizabethan. The church has a Norman doorway. The belfry clock chimes the hours, and the bells jangle sweet old tunes three times a day.

We pride ourselves in Fleet Street that we are *au fait* with everything; that we are up to date in everything; that we are the recipients of the latest news from the remotest quarters of the globe; that we have marched with the times; that whoever has been left behind in the race, we at least are still in the van.

I recommend a country holiday as a wholesome corrective of this habit of mind. I mean, a holiday in some village where you don't keep a car, and are more or less caught up into the life of the place. You will get a few shocks, but they are exhilarating shocks.

Yes, I am staying in Cranford. Of course, it isn't Cranford, but it might have stepped out of the pages of Mrs. Gaskell. Oxfordshire people will no doubt recognise

t, and readers are at liberty to guess its name, but no prize will be awarded for the correct solution.

It may be that one has become *blasé* with life in the streets of a city, or it may be that the only adventurous imes are those which are spent in the country. But all can say is that if you suddenly descend on the country, ot to the houses of friends (where you will have shooting, ishing, and the indoor recreations of the house-party) r to the friendly hostelry, you will find adventure at your loor every day.

The first thing that will strike you is that Fleet Street s less up to date than you thought, and the country more o. You will also find a new generation to whom estab-ished ideals and recognised authorities mean nothing.

If I were writing a boat-race article in Fleet Street it vould be incomplete if I did not make reference to Nickalls r Muttlebury. In the days of my youth every schoolboy new the record of all the giants up to his own time. At Cranford (I must keep up the name, of course) I met a public-school boy who is an exceptionally fine oarsman nd quite *au fait* with all that is going on in the rowing vorld in general and public school and varsity in particu-ar. I mentioned Muttlebury, and to my stupefaction was sked, " Who is Muttlebury ? "

That's your new generation all over. In Fleet Street ve write about " Muttle " to a generation that knows him ot. And we go on thinking ourselves up to date. You earn many lessons in humility in the country.

The fact is that we who are old and yet retain the nentality that adjusts itself to new environment have een carried along by such easy stages that we don't realise ow far we have travelled until we try to do something vhich we did in the time that seems so near to us, but vhich we discover is almost prehistoric to the present eneration.

In Fleet Street we can still write about the joys of the ountry walk. We (who now move about the country

only in cars) think of the country walks of our youth, and are oblivious to the fact that such things are unknown to the youth of to-day.

We can write beautifully (in Fleet Street) of the Sabbath walk when the bells sweetly chime us to church in the peaceful calm of early morning. Well, I took such a Sunday walk in Cranford. It had rained heavily during the night, so the usual route across the fields was impossible. I had not travelled along the lovely track since 1887, and I shall never travel it *on foot* again. It was only a two-mile walk; the road was beautifully tarred, none of the old mud which one so well remembered; everything pointed to a peaceful Sabbath walk full of old memories.

Then came the shock of my life. In those two short miles, at that early hour of the morning, we counted twenty-eight motor vehicles coming in one direction and eighty-seven going in the other, a total of one hundred and fifteen vehicles to be dodged and evaded. And they took some dodging, too. I now want to know why the motor-cyclist, with the whole width of the road at his disposal, prefers to whizz past you so close that your Norfolk jacket flaps in the breeze he has created. Cars are more merciful, but what are you to do when two of them (going in opposite directions at fifty miles an hour) reach you at the same time?

Another thing I want to know badly. Where have all the old footpaths gone? They used to exist in the wide grass-tracks on each side of the road. In my childhood the familiar cry used to be, "Walk on the footpath, dears, not on the nasty muddy road."

Now the road is tarred and no longer muddy, but the footpaths have been allowed to overgrow themselves with grass. On a wet morning they are no refuge for the pedestrian, so there is nothing for him to do but walk on the beautiful clean surface of the road and perform gymnastics as each car or charabanc approaches him.

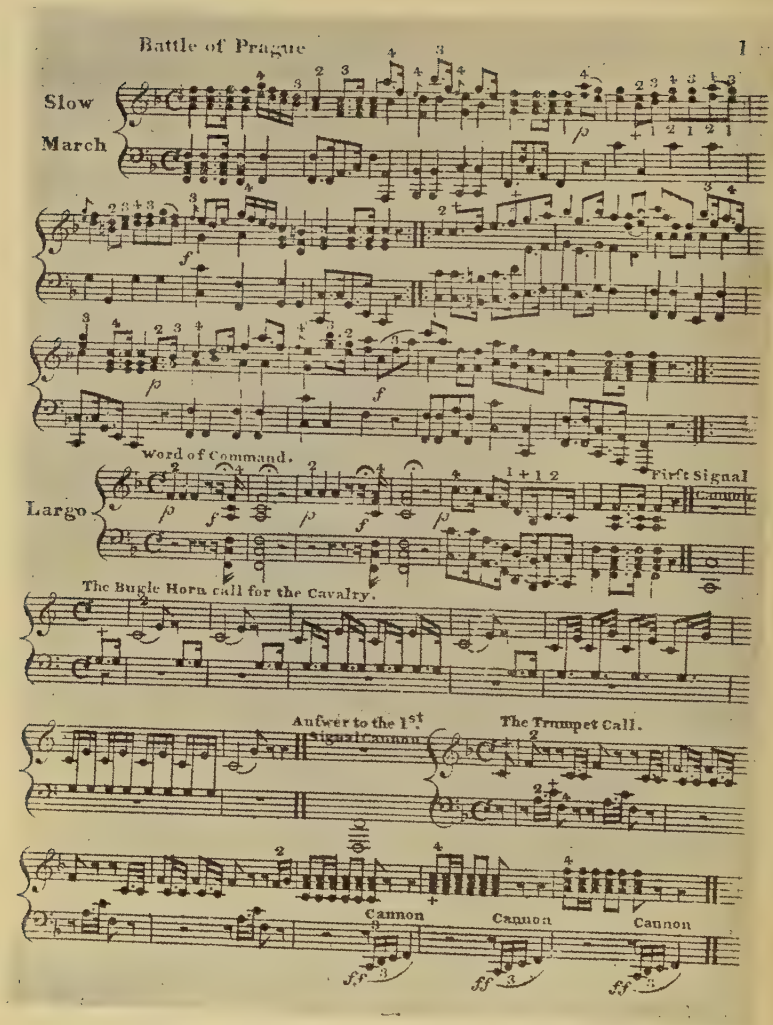


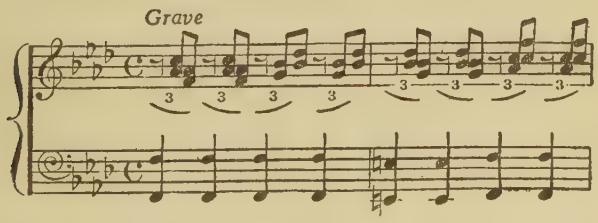
PLATE X—PAGE FROM "THE BATTLE OF PRAGUE"

I have been impatient of pedestrians all these years. Now they have my deepest sympathy and commiseration.

I pass over the excitement of a visit to the belfry after an interval of thirty years, during which time I have forgotten all about my youthful enthusiasm for "Stedman's doubles," "Triple bob major," and "Grandsire minor," and the rest of the intricacies of "change ringing"—that pursuit known only in English belfries. I found, however, that I can still at least pull "tenor behind" in "the hundred and twenty" on six bells. Such are the consolations of age.

But our most exciting times have been in the exploration of an old Georgian house as it was left by an old lady lately deceased. From an attic I retrieved some weird collections of music, including a finely engraved copy of *The Battle of Prague*, of which I have vainly endeavoured to secure a copy since Sir Hubert Parry played it (by way of a rag) at one of his lectures. It used to be the grand stock piece of Victorian young ladies. Once they could "play *The Battle of Prayg* without looking at the fingers" they were recognised pianists for life.

Opposite is the first page (with its careful labels) of this once famous "Grand Descriptive Battle Piece." And here are a couple of bars of the priceless "cries of the wounded":



Whaur's yer Wullie Schönberg noo?

XLII

HARMONY AT KILLYBUCK

From a MS. of Shamus O'Sullivan[1]

Faith, 'tis the harmony in more sinses than wan that we are afther havin' in Killybuck this last blissid week that ivver was. 'Tis the childer in the school, and the mimbers av the choir that has been practisin' through the winter, and 'tis the illigant silver cup they have this day brought back wid them from the *Feis*[2] at Ballykenny.

John Bull's Other Island houlds no fairer spot than Killybuck, though 'tis not on the map ye'll find it; mesilf bein strategious enough to conceal the real fine name av ut to spare the blushes av the heroes and heroesses that did give the batin' to the singers of ivvery contagious village at the great *Feis* av Ballykenny.

It was the harmony av music that Killybuck did show in Ballykenny this mornin', and 'tis the harmony of sowls that they'll be afther showin' this night whin Killybuck is ong fate, and the cup is christened, and the Orangemen drinkin' the hilths av the Hibernians, and vice-varcy-the-other-way-about as they say in France.

'Tis little harmony of sowls there was whin last Killybuck was ong fate, for the Orange Lodge had bate the Hibernian Lodge by three goals to wan, and were celebratin' the victory at Dan O'Rafferty's shebeen. "Faith, 'tis sore hearts there will be in the Vatican this night," says Dan to me. "An' 'tis sore heads there will be in Killybuck to-morrow," thinks I to mesilf—me watchin' him drink the hilth av ivvery siveral and indiveedual mimber of the team, time and agin.

But in gineral we are a peaceable folk in Killybuck, and 'tis only after the futball match that relations betune Prodestant and Papisher are wantin' in cordiality. On Sint Patrick's day 'tis the Orangemen that will stay at home, and on the Twilfth av July 'tis the Hibernians that

[1] Wherein he discourseth on a certain Musical Competition Festival.

[2] *Feis Ceoil; anglice,* Musical Festival.

will do likewise; each wan enjoyin' his Procession widout unplisantness.

'Twas not always so in Killybuck, but since Prodestant and Papisher have taken to the singin' competitions, uphouldin' the honour av the ould village in company, divvle a word av politics will ye hear in public now; the lions av the wan Lodge lyin' down wid the lambs av the other as peaceable as may be.

We had the great ividence av this only last year. The Grand Masther av the Orange Lodge was the new Prisbyterian Minister—a Scotchman from Peebles wid but little understandin' av Killybuck sintiments. He was all agin what he called provocátiveness, and got the moithered notion in his head that drums in the procession was too excitin'. So the night before the Twilfth av July what does he do but hide the drums in his stable, and double-padlock the doors av ut. So whin me and Andrew McNeill would be afther goin' to the Lodge to see that all was in order for next day's procession, divvle a drum cud we find. "Be the hokey," says I, "an' what like procession wud it be to-morrow annyway widout the drums?" "What indeed?" says Andrew. So to Dan O'Rafferty's we wint to discuss the mysterious calamity. 'Twas there we see Tim O'Brien the Prisident av the Hibernian Lodge sittin' happy and quiet over a John Jamieson.

We didn't talk so low but what he cud overhear our throuble, and crossin' the room he says: "Shamus," says he, "ye've been a good neighbour av mine this twinty year, and 'tis the black shame it will be if ye can't bate your drums on the Twilfth. Can ye keep a secret?" says he.

"Sure," says I.

"Well, then," says he, "'tis the Hibernian drums ye shall have, I if lose my Prisidency over ut."

"But," says I, "what wud we be afther lookin' like annyway, batin' a Hibernian drum in an Orange procession?" (I shud explain that an Orange drum is

adorned with the picture av King William crossin' the Boyne on his white horse, and a Hibernian wan wid a portrait of Robert Emmett their martyred pathriot.)

"Oh," says Tim, "cover Robert over wid a few extry lilies, and divvle a bit wiser will annywan be." (For we always decorate the drum wid orange lilies on the Twilfth.)

"Tim, 'tis the genius ye are," says I.

"I am that," says he, "so come wid me to the Hibernian Lodge afther the neighbours will be abed, and I'll subthract the drums for ye."

We tuk the Hibernian drums over to the Orange Lodge at midnight, and began coverin' thim wid the flowers. Be the time we'd finished decoratin', divvle a feature av Robert Emmett cud ye see for lilies.

Oh, 'twas the great procession we had nixt day. Andrew bate his drum like the giant seraphim till the drumsticks was rid with the blood av his wrists. Nivver the like was seen in Killybuck.

"Och, Shamus," says ould Bridget O'Halloran to me, "'tis siventy Twilfth av July's have I seen, but nivver the like av this wan for the beautiful lilies. Sorra wan bit av King Willyum could I see on the drum for thim; and Andrew batin' it like an angel fit to drive us crazy wid delight."

"Faith," thinks I to mesilf, "an' 'tis crazy ye'd be wid another emotion did ye know whose portrait was under thim lilies."

But I am forgettin' the *Feis*. We hould a grand rehearsal in the schoolroom the afthernoon before it. Childer, and choirs, and parents, and frinds are all there wid the local gintry. Gineral Cregan wid his wudden leg nivver misses. And Mrs. Fitzgerald, the great lady from Goraghmore House ('tis the great house, too, standin' off the road wid a fine portico and a family banshee), she conducts the singin'—a fine upstandin' wumman.

There was a privelance av Sassenach chunes this time

by Sir Hubert Parry Barrowknight, Sir Walford Davies Knight widout the barrow, Profissor Dunhill, Profissor Bantock VicAlpine Dhu, and others—all no doubt owin' to the Sassenach adjudicator bein' at Ballykenny this year, but the childer pleased us wid *The Harp that wanst.* The school stove was heated because av the January weather we are havin' this month av May, but whin the childer struck up *O wert thou in the cauld blast,* they put the feelin' into it; and we shivered and thought av the weather we left outside.

Whin 'twas all over, Mrs. Fitzgerald tuk the floor, and, says she, "What time is ut ye are to be at the Hall to-morrow?" "Quarter-to-ten," says the childer. "And boys, what is ut ye are to bring wid ye?" says she. "Pockut hankechers," says they. "And for what?" says she. "So's we'll not sniff on the platform," says they. "Like whin?" says she. "Like last year," says they. "Ah, glad ye've not forgot that *awful* exhibeetion," says she, smilin' kindly like. An' they laughed, and we laughed, and the rehearsal was over.

"And now," says Mrs. Fitzgerald, "ye'll find your way to the Orange Hall for tea; and, boys, don't get meddlin' wid the kittles on the fire; remember how Andy Devine was scalded last year." Wid that we all made for the place av refrishment, and 'twas beautiful to see the harmony av ut. For all ye cud tell, ther might nivver have been a Battle of the Boyne at all, wid Prodestant childer, and Papisher visitors, and local gintry all consumin' tea and cake together, and the portraits av Queen Victoria and Sir Idward Cyarson smilin' a blessin' upon us from the walls, to say nothin' av the oil paintin' av the founder av the Lodge—a benivolent lukin' ould gintleman wid a beard like the Grand Dodge av Venice. He was a great medical man, wid only wan powerful mixture for all complaints. Whin ye went sick, wan dose made ye lep, two made ye sicker, and three brought ye to death's door. So be the time ye got back to your oreeginal condeetion

the relief was that great ye considthered yersilf cured; and so his fame . . .

. . . . . .

NOTE.—Here Mr. O'Sullivan's MS. breaks off abruptly, which is a pity, as he would doubtless have shown how Competition Festivals in Ireland are working wonders. Alone of all public activities there, they know no distinctions of party, class or creed. Who shall prophesy the far-reaching effect of this great movement in the future?

XLIII

A CHRISTMAS VIGIL

PICTURE to yourselves the earnest author sitting down to a serious work on a serious subject, fortified by many books, a stack of notes at his elbow ready for action, the matter and form clearly arranged in his head, with nothing remaining but to put his great thoughts on paper.

It is a curious but well-known psychological fact that the musician can write either music or words with the greatest of ease in the midst of the greatest of noises—provided they *are* noises. But once let a note of music intrude, be it whistled or merely hummed, and then all is up.

The glad season of Christmas is upon us. At any rate, on this date (December 6th) the carol-singers think so. At this moment (9 p.m.) a second platoon of leather-lunged boys is at my front door telling me in stridulous cacophony how *Shepherd swotched ther flocks boy noight.* Three flights of stairs and a presumably sound-proof room cannot shut out their raucous strains.

I ring for assistance.

I hear them chivvied from the door by a militant cook who dislikes to hear shepherds swotching their flocks by night as much as I do.

Ten minutes' silence, then a single anæmic treble voice is heard struggling with *Good King Wenceslas.* Its owner has evidently mistaken the date of the "feast of Stephen."

After two more verses of torture I hear sounds of a flank attack from the kitchen regions, and good King Wenceslas fades into the night. Now I can start my work. But no: brazen sounds—dimly sensed—now resolve themselves into a Salvation Army brass band.

Right opposite my house they plant themselves, and proceed to discourse what, I presume, they consider to be Christmas music.

In the days of the old "Waits," however badly they might sing or play, they at any rate did perform Christmas carols, and held their hand until Christmas before they

inflicted them upon us. Now, however, their degenerate successors begin to levy tentative blackmail upon us in November. By December they are in full cry, and Christmas leaves us with nothing more to be suffered at their hands.

Instead of old carols—which, at any rate, were good music—we suffer from hymn-tunes. Before my militant cook had recuperated for another sortie I had to endure the following programme (several verses to each hymn): *Abide with Me; Earth hath many a noble city; Lo! He comes, with clouds descending; O God, our help in ages past; Hark! the herald-angels sing* (to Mendelssohn's fatuous tune), and the inevitable *Woile shepherd swotch ther flocks boy noight*—six appalling hymn-tunes before the enemy could be routed.

I ask, in all seriousness, why the Christmas season should be made an excuse for nightly mental torture of this sort? In any other country there would be effective police intervention. What I cannot understand is the jocularity of the Press on the subject every year.

Surely there must be many pressmen who do their articles at home. They must find it as impossible as I do to preserve their sanity through these nightly orgies of "Christmas music." Yet every Press reference to the nuisance is invariably jocular in character.

I read the *Morning Post* every day, but am distressed that such ill-timed levity as the following should appear in the columns of my favourite paper:

The voice of the carol-singer is already to be heard, many times nightly, and we could well understand the exasperation of the housewife a night or so back, who soundly rated two small boys for their ill-timed and, she said, decidedly unmusical efforts at *Good King Wenceslas*. The two waited in silence until she had paused for breath, when, from the safety of the other side of the gate, the smaller piped: "It's all right, missus; we ain't askin' you ter pay. We was only practisin' for the choir."

Well, after this, what *is* one to do? Succumb, I suppose, to the "Christmas spirit" and dodder into anecdotage slenderly connected with music, so here goes (from an evening paper this time):

Recently, at a social gathering, Bishop Harris was invited to sing. He declined, but told the following incident as illustrative of his talent in that line.

During his journey through Palestine, one evening, after he and Mr. Spencer, who occupied the tent with him, had gone to bed, the Bishop began humming a tune of the olden times, called *New Durham*. Mr. Spencer joined in, and the two began singing a verse of *one of our familiar hymns*. (There you are; *hymns* again, you see.) Before the verse was finished, a donkey outside the tent brayed as only a donkey in the East can bray. While the hills of Judæa were sending back the echoes of this most extraordinary and untimely performance, the Arab dragoman put his head inside the tent, and, apologising for his donkey, said, "Ha, you sing one tune he thinks he knows!"

But, seriously, one cannot fail to observe that whenever the Briton wishes to celebrate any occasion in song he cuts rather a pathetic figure. He lost his folk-music, but acquired a terrifying collection of hymn-tunes, more or less sloppy in character. A poor substitute for the glorious folk-music of his ancestors, but it is all he has got to go upon at present, poor fellow!

The witty songs evolved by our lads during the War had to be set to hymn-tunes, because they were the only tunes everybody knew.

The joys of Christmas-tide likewise are celebrated to the same lugubrious hymn-tunes, because we have forgotten the old carols.

And here comes to me the first bit of coherent thought that I have been able to summon up this evening—I shall turn my sufferings into a chapter on "The Obsession of the Hymn-tune." You will find it on page 201.

XLIV

A WORD ON WIGAN

I HAVE been to Wigan.

To mention Wigan on any music-hall stage is to set your audience rocking with laughter. Not even the mother-in-law, the lodger or the latchkey can raise such a laugh as the simple word "Wigan."

For that reason I always classed Wigan amongst mythical places like Cricklewood and Ponder's End. But I was wrong. Wigan is a real place. It is not a figment of the music-hall artist's fancy, as I vainly imagined. I can affirm that it has a music-hall of its own (for I have been there too), only they call it a Hippodrome. Until a little bird—learned in stage-lore—whispered to me the reason, I used to wonder why music-halls all up and down the country have been re-christened "Hippodromes." It appears that the syndicates who now control the "halls" are a body of highly humoursome men, and that this seeming meaningless piece of nomenclature is really a cryptic and complex joke, deeply thought out, and of high relevancy. You see, on the halls the chief asset is the cross-talk knockabout comedians. They have hoarse voices and indulge in horseplay. There you have it: "hoarse" — "horse" — "Hippodrome." You get me? Who says the Chosen People have no sense of humour?

The Wigan Hippodrome had a couple of clever cross-talk comedians—a lydy and a man. But they were too subtle for Wigan. For example, they made play with old English expressions; the man had explained to the lydy the meaning of "tush," "forsooth," and so on, and then:

She: Wot's the meanin' of "go to"?

He: It means that Shikespeare was too much of a gentleman to complete the sentence.

They coruscated like that for some time, but couldn't lighten the gloom in the auditorium. My neighbour in front—wearing a cloth cap and a sense of injury—turned

round to me with bitter irony: "It doan't täke much to mek thee laugh, mister! 'Tripe,' I calls it."

But I understood next day. At the station I found an hilarious crowd *en route* for Blackpool. It seemed odd that anyone should feel light-hearted at the prospect of a journey to Blackpool. Then suddenly it dawned upon me. Wigan had awakened during the night and seen the joke about Shikespeare. I know now why Bradshaw—prince of humorists—places Wigan and Wigtown in such close proximity on page lxvii.

I must ask Mr. J. H. Thomas why it is that a connexion with railways turns otherwise respectable people into incorrigible humorists—at other people's expense, of course. On this same journey the ABC compilers worked off a merry jest on me. Having left my Bradshaw behind, I bought the July ABC and strolled at leisure to Wigan station to catch the London train scheduled (in ABC) for 3.40.

It had left at 3.4.

This was one of the few occasions on which I really wanted a golfer's vocabulary. I can't say that I like golfers as a class, but the presence of one of them at this juncture would, I felt, have been most helpful. I had the choice left of dallying with the damsels of the refreshment-room, or buying a book of Messrs. W. H. Smith & Sons. I did both. I dallied what time I consumed two coffees (I repeat, it was *three-forty* p.m.) and then purchased of a chatty bookstall attendant the *London Magazine*, with its instalment of *Tales of Herman, by Finck.*

Finck is the wittiest *raconteur* in London, and his lightning repartee is the most crushing thing on earth. But it is always wit without a sting. I could have wished that in these reminiscences he had not seemed so overwhelmed with a sense of literary responsibility. The tale of his visit to Sandringham with The Follies is very funny as he *writes* it, but his account of the affair—as he *told* it to me at the time—was a scream. However—apart from G. K. Chesterton on *Holidays*, and Mrs. Asquith's *Without*

Prejudice—I found the August number of the *London* worth buying, if only for Finck's tale of his grandfather and the Drury Lane baby. It brightened a dismal and dinnerless journey to London on a crowded train (thanks to the practical joker who complies ABC).

But I am forgetting Wigan. Arrival there was a depressing experience, and I gladly sought my hotel and went to bed with a book. But what a change in the morning! You go to sleep in "a city of mean streets," and you wake in a city of romance. The sounds that greet your drowsy ears are those of Bruges. Only the carillon is wanting to complete the illusion. A church clock chimes the quarters; hotel servants bustle and chatter in the yard; dogs bark; fowls cackle; carts rattle over cobbled streets; and sabots clatter rhythmically on stony pavements. Even mosquitoes are not wanting, as hands and face show on rising. It is true that you find your romantic-sounding sabots were but prosaic Lancashire clogs, but the illusion was complete while it lasted.

A five-mile tram ride to Ashton-in-Makerfield was an arresting experience. You solemnly roll out of "mean streets" into a devastating respectability in bricks and mortar. The houses that line each side of the road have been built at different dates in groups of four or five. Each group is called a "Terrace," or plain "Villas." So for some miles you can follow the development of the town: "Acacia Terrace, 1884"; "Verbena Villas, 1896"; "Lilac Terrace, 1901"; until you come to "Wistaria Crescent, 1920." On either side, in the middle distance, you can see coalpits, with intervening fields that try to look like grass ones, but only succeed in being sodden, waterlogged swamps bounded by sleazy slag-heaps. A solitary and derelict barley-field is the most intriguing sight of all. With all the acres of Argentina and Canada to choose from, with all the million tons of grain that it might import, whatever use has Wigan for one paltry barley-patch of

about two acres in extent? What farmer planted it? What miller grinds it? What profit can either hope to make out of it? It must be Wigan's agricultural ewe lamb, kept as a pathetic reminder of the days when that leprous-looking landscape was one of smiling fields and babbling brooks. A curious feature of the ride gives colour to this belief: When an industrial centre throws its deadly tentacles out into the pure country, its rows of respectable villas usually make short work of cottages and farms *en route*. But Wigan seems to have kept a tender spot in its heart for antiquity. Hemmed in with "Terraces" and "Crescents," one came across what was once a farmstead, with the buildings untouched—even to the granary with its outdoor stone staircase. They are slumlike dwellings now, but at any rate they still stand, with a curious sort of dignity in their sordid surroundings. And cottages too, that must date from Tudor times, and that were once ivy-clad. The amazing thing is that though the ivy has long since died by poison, its leafless tentacles still cling to the walls—stark, grimy and ligneous—and have never been removed by improving hands. Neither have the quaint little windows with their small panes.

That is the odd thing about Wigan—behind a sordid exterior it hides many quaintnesses, and not a few beautiful things. One which cannot be hidden, however, is the glorious old parish church, without doubt one of the finest in England. I dropped in for ten minutes one week-day while Evening Prayer was being sung by a choir of trebles, and couldn't help thinking what an object-lesson it was in what can be achieved with limited resources. The boys sang with beautifully refined tone; the organ was unobtrusively and tastefully played; and even the "Anglican" chants—although in unison—were effective by reason of a judicious diatonic selection. It is good to see Wigan giving a lead like this, showing that artistic results can be obtained independently of the "four-parts" fetish.

But my most wonderful experience was the opportunity

of hearing several working lads play the piano. The party included miners, boot repairers, cabinet makers and suchlike. I don't know which astonished me most—their intensely temperamental readings of Beethoven, Chopin, Bach, Schumann and Scarlatti, the ease and delicacy of their phrasing, the dexterity with which gnarled fingers and chapped hands rippled over difficult runs; or the dogged perseverance that constrains hefty manual workers to spend their evenings—after a day's toil—in reaching so high a standard of proficiency.

But that is Wigan all over—unpromising (even forbidding) in appearance, surprising in achievement.